

SI EXCLUSIVE

Sports Illustrated

Aaron Levi *wanted to know who he was, where he came from, where he belonged. From an early age, he had questions about his identity.*

He was adopted and biracial. Not only slender but growing taller by the year. When he finally pieced it all together, he was told that his biological father was the most transformative player in pro basketball history, and one of the most transcendent athletes of the 20th century. . . .

BY GARY M. POMERANTZ



Miss

LIKE YOU MEAN IT

OUT HERE, EVERY DAY IS PERFECT,
EVEN WHEN YOU'RE NOT.

Get in the game at **GetGolfReady.com**
with 5 lessons starting at \$99



PGA

Features

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

20

Foul Play

The game is facing a crisis:
It stinks to watch
By Seth Davis

26

Knight Trumps Wizard

After UCLA's majestic run, the
curtain rose on muscular Indiana
By Luke Winn

PRO FOOTBALL

32

DeMarco Murray

How is it that the All-Pro
appears headed out of Dallas?
By Austin Murphy

COLLEGE SPORTS

46

A Hidden Epidemic

A new film sheds light on the
scourge that is sexual assault
By Ben Reiter

BONUS

50

A Giant Shadow

Wilt Chamberlain said there
never were any "little Wilties."
That may not have been true
By Gary M. Pomerantz

Departments

2 **SI Now**

4 **Leading Off**

10 **Inbox**

12 **Scorecard**

16 **Faces in
The Crowd**

17 **Just My Type**

Dan Patrick:

Mark Jackson talks
about talking back

60 **Point After**

Steve Rushin:

The most clued-in of
Ping-Pong players

ON THE COVER:

DEANNE FITZMAURICE FOR
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (LEVI); PAUL
VATHIS/AP (CHAMBERLAIN)

3.9.15

2015 | VOLUME 122 | NO. 10

LINEUP

PRO BASKETBALL

40

Atlanta Hawks

They have no one resembling a
superstar, but they're still smashing
records and winning fans. That's
because the roster has embraced a
system of rapid-fire ball movement—
especially the point guard

By Lee Jenkins

PHOTOGRAPH BY GREG NELSON
FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

+

RUNAWAY LEADERS

Under the direction of Jeff Teague,
the Hawks have dominated the
Eastern Conference and are taking
aim at the overall No. 1 seed.

Sports Illustrated



"This is a very serious topic, not just in sports but in our society."

—Warren Moon

sports but in our society. I'm sure a big percentage of calls that police get to go out to homes are for domestic violence, so it's not only a sports problem. It's a problem we need to address in this country and address it very seriously.

MG: You are also a Seahawks broadcaster. Has everyone gotten over the last-second Super Bowl loss?

WM: I hope they get over it. You gotta move on because nothing is going to change. To second-guess yourself for the rest of your life... I've done that over big games in my career, but what can you do? Everybody always wants to do something different [afterward] than what actually happened. The play was called, it wasn't executed properly and New England made a good play to win the game.

For more of Moon's interview, plus the SI Now archive, go to SI.com/now

WARREN MOON The Hall of Fame quarterback, who ranks seventh on the NFL's alltime passing list (49,325 yards), gives his thoughts on Adrian Peterson and Ray Rice, and on how the Seahawks are coping with defeat

MAGGIE GRAY: You had some [domestic violence] issues 20 years ago in which you were acquitted of all charges. Do you have any advice for Adrian Peterson and Ray Rice?

WARREN MOON: I think you just have to learn from your mistakes and take the proper steps moving forward so that something like that doesn't happen again... I think if they do that and get the right type of

counseling, and also reach out to others and spread the message that this is something that you don't do, I think they'll have a positive effect from it.

MG: If what happened with you happened today, the [NFL's] new code of conduct would have said that you would be suspended. Do you think this new code of conduct is fair?

WM: No question about it. I think this is a very serious topic, not just in

TUNE IN



EPISODE: FEB. 24

Former NHL star **Jeremy Roenick** on alternate careers: "I'd go into music and be Justin Timberlake."



EPISODE: FEB. 25

Liam McGeary (above left): How his time in jail led him to a career in MMA.



EPISODE: FEB. 26

After his latest alleged relapse, what's next for Angels' slugger **Josh Hamilton**?



EPISODE: FEB. 27

TNT's **Kenny Smith**: Reuniting **Shaq** and **Kobe** on *Inside the NBA* would be a lot of fun.



Tory Burch. CEO, designer, philanthropist and Wall Street Journal reader.

Photography by Brigitte Lacombe

PEOPLE WHO DON'T HAVE TIME MAKE TIME TO READ THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Tory Burch always makes time for the Journal. It informs and inspires her in business and in life. Make time for The Wall Street Journal today. [#MakeTime](#)

Make time for the Journal.
\$12 for the first 12 weeks.
Visit WSJ.com/12for12 today.



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
Read ambitiously

©2015 Dow Jones & Co. Inc. All rights reserved.

MAJALMIGHT





1
of
3



**Leading
Off**

Help Me, Ronda!

■ Cat Zingano (in blue) came out flying in her UFC 184 bantamweight title fight against Ronda Rousey, launching a right knee at the reigning champion, but was quickly grounded. Rousey easily evaded the attack, flipped the previously undefeated Zingano on her head and put the challenger in a decisive straight armlock. In just 14 seconds—a UFC record—the bout was over. The victory, Rousey's 11th without defeat, means that her last three wins required a total of 1:36.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
MARK J. TERRILL
AP



Leading
Off

+

2
of
3

Minnie Miñoso

1925–2015

■ Perhaps as much as his 1,963 hits, his 1,023 RBIs and his 205 stolen bases, Miñoso, who died on Sunday of a tear in his pulmonary artery, will be remembered for the figure he didn't produce so easily: his age. The White Sox, with whom Miñoso spent 12 of his 17 major league seasons, put his age at 89, but Miñoso himself was coy on the subject.

Then again, Miñoso seemed timeless. At age 23, the Afro-Cuban outfielder jumped from the Negro leagues to the Indians, in 1949, two years after Jackie Robinson broke baseball's color line. Two years after that, he was traded to Chicago, becoming the White Sox' first black player. Pictured here during spring training 1956, Miñoso played in big league games across five decades (even though his appearances in 1976 and '80, at ages 50 and 54, were little more than publicity stunts), was a nine-time All-Star, and all his life was a smiling, laughing kid at heart.

Along with the Cubs' Ernie Banks (who died in January),





Miñoso became an unlikely icon in one of the country's most segregated cities. Like Banks, he never reached the postseason, and like Banks, he remained ever optimistic.

Miñoso retired with a .298 career average and three Gold Gloves, but he failed in 18 attempts to gain entry into the Hall of Fame, his case damaged by the gimmicky plate appearances he made for the White Sox later in life. A quarter-century after his last swing, he saw Chicago win the 2005 World Series, and he was gifted the ring that he missed out on when the Go-Go Sox won the 1959 pennant, two years after he had been traded to Cleveland. The ring—won by a team run by a Venezuelan-born skipper, assembled by a black general manager and adored by Barack Obama—was more than a reminder of a one-off championship. It was a testament to the impact Miñoso had on the franchise as a player and as a trailblazer.

—Andrew Lawrence

PHOTOGRAPH BY
HY PESKIN
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED



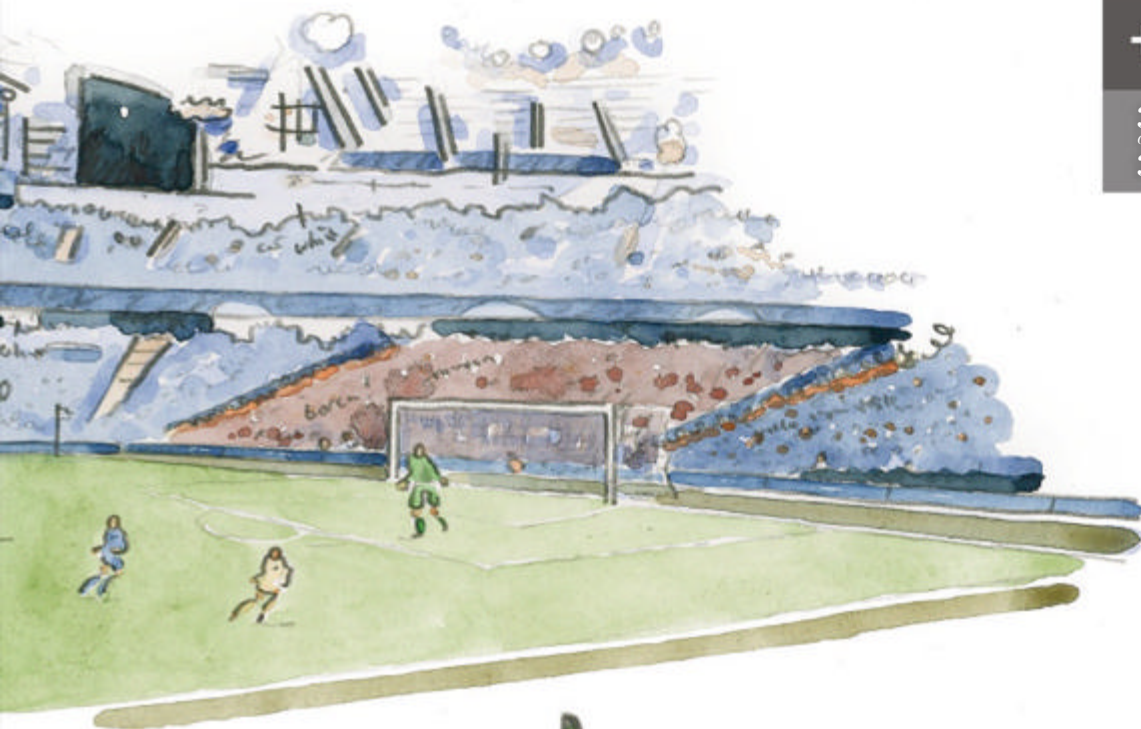


32

Leading
Off

Paint-by-Blunders

SI last week dispatched watercolor artist **Elisha Cooper** to England to depict the first legs of two high-powered Champions League matchups: Barcelona at Manchester City (top) and Monaco at Arsenal (bottom). In the former, on Feb. 24, Barca's Lionel Messi, wearing his vomit-yellow third kit, played casually with the ball, as if taking it for a walk—but when a defender tried to steal it, Messi was gone in a flash. City was outclassed 2-1. Messi's miss of a last-minute penalty suggested he is, against all evidence, human. The following night, at Emirates Stadium in London, Arsenal showed it too was human, eschewing defense, missing open shots and, ultimately, punching the turf in frustration after a 3-1 upset loss. Return legs will be played on March 17 and 18.

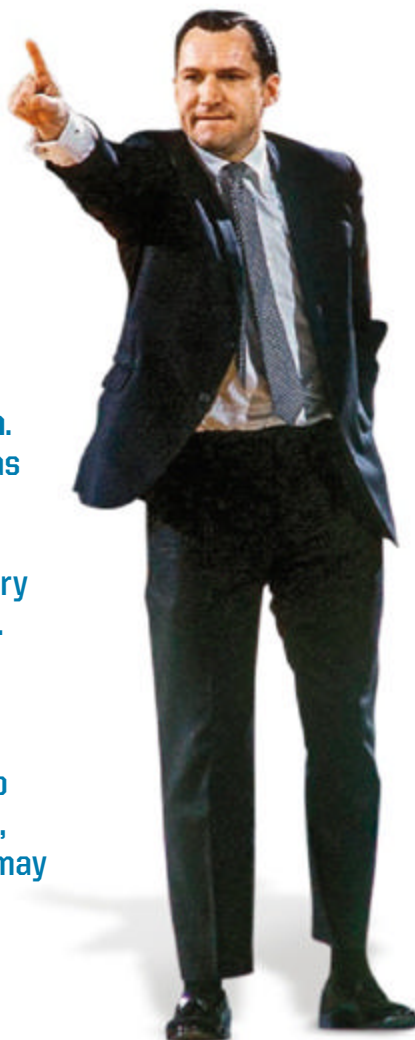


INBOX

FOR FEB. 23, 2015

I enjoyed your tribute to **Dean Smith**. Years ago, when my youngest son was eight or nine, we were at the Crosby National Celebrity Golf Tournament, when Coach Smith walked by in a hurry with a bunch of tournament officials. Smith noticed my son was wearing a UNC cap and stopped to ask him if he would like to have it signed. The officials pleaded with Coach Smith to keep moving, but he paused and said, "You never know when a young man may grow up to be 6' 9" and have a great hook shot." My son never forgot that moment and still has his signed hat.

Greg Horton, Tobaccoville, N.C.



Add former minor league outfielder Ira Smith to the story of how being a replacement player altered one's chances of making the majors. Smith played in around 10 replacement games for the Padres. However, once the strike was over the team opted not to call up Smith from the minors despite his .400 average.

Geoffrey Tinelli, Woodbine, Md.

I can understand Tom Verducci's issue with MLB's use of replacement players during spring training in 1995. However, as a devoted baseball fan of more than 50 years, I much preferred those guys to the players of the steroid era that followed. At least back then we knew what to expect.

Ron Muzechuk, Vandalia, Ohio

COVER



I loved Chris Ballard's article on the **Warriors**. They are a great, well-rounded team with arguably the NBA's best player, Stephen Curry. However, Ballard neglected to mention the guy who helped put this team together: Golden State executive board member and talent scout Jerry West.

Daniel F. Miller
New Smyrna Beach, Fla.



PAGE
49

Tim Layden's essay on **Jerry Tarkanian** was masterly and reminded me of something famed sportswriter Red Smith would have written. I didn't really admire Tarkanian when he first began to garner attention. However, I began to think a bit differently when he stood up to the NCAA and sued it for violating his right to due process. While I still wasn't convinced that Tarkanian had always played by the rules, I wasn't sure that the rules were fairly enforced.

Brian Donaldson
Knoxville, Tenn.

CONTACT
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

Letters E-mail SI at letters@si.com or fax SI at 212-467-2417. Letters should include the writer's full name, address and home telephone number and may be edited for clarity and space. **Customer Service and Subscriptions** For 24/7 service, go to SI.com/customerservice. Call 1-800-528-5000 or write to SI at P.O. Box 30602, Tampa, FL 33630-0602. To purchase reprints of SI covers, go to SICovers.com. **Advertising** For ad rates, an editorial calendar or a media kit, email SI at SIpubqueries@timeinc.com.



Robert Graham®

www.robertgraham.us

SCOTTSDALE, AZ | VENICE, CA | MOHEGAN SUN, CT | BOCA RATON, FL | SARASOTA, FL
PALM BEACH GARDENS, FL | SHORT HILLS, NJ | BLEECKER STREET, NY | GARDEN CITY, NY
LAS VEGAS, NV | HOUSTON, TX | DALLAS, TX

Edited by JIM GORANT + TED KEITH

SCORECARD

Help Needed

Regardless of how many games he misses, Josh Hamilton's reported drug relapse shows the Angels' star has much bigger concerns than just getting back on the field

BY TOM VERDUCCI

NO SPORT IS held to a higher standard when it comes to the use of banned drugs than baseball. The Hall of Fame balloting has become a monthlong annual debate about the Steroid Era, though its tiresome shouting leans less toward Lincoln-Douglas and more toward Povich-Springer.

Good for baseball: The outrage when players make poor choices is a compliment to the game. Baseball fans care about the game and its history, as well as sportsmanship and the health of its players.

One of those players, Angels outfielder Josh Hamilton, reportedly met with new commissioner Rob Manfred and MLB officials in New York City last week

after he notified them that he had violated not only the sport's drug policy but also the conditions of his 2006 reinstatement to baseball as set forth by then commissioner Bud Selig. Hamilton did not play from '03 through '05 because of addictions to cocaine, crack and alcohol. He was suspended multiple times then, including for the entire '04 and '05 seasons.

This time you can save your outrage. Hamilton, 33, needs neither chastising nor the full wrath of Manfred. He needs help.

If a man is the sum of his choices, Hamilton must be held accountable for the poor ones he made when he was 20 years old. Injured, away from his parents for the first time and flush

with a \$3.9 million bonus from being the first pick of the 1999 draft, Hamilton walked into a Bradenton, Fla., tattoo parlor in the spring of 2001 and fell down hell's rabbit hole. The crowd there introduced him to strip clubs, alcohol and cocaine.

Somewhere down that rabbit hole, choice surrendered to addiction. Hamilton made eight trips to six rehab facilities in four years, only to be clawed back by addiction's grip.

In October 2005, Hamilton showed up at his grandmother's doorstep one morning strung out on crack and 50 pounds underweight.

Hamilton cleaned up enough to be reinstated the next summer by Selig. Despite having played only 26 minor league games over a five-year period, during the next six seasons (2007–12) Hamilton staged the greatest show in Home Run Derby history in '08 (at Yankee Stadium); won an MVP in '10; hit an extra-inning home run in the '11 World Series that, until a St. Louis rally, put Texas

within three outs of its first world championship; hit four home runs in a game in '12; and, at the height of his popularity that season, had more people buy his jersey than any player except Derek Jeter.

That player—the one who invoked comparisons with Mickey Mantle—



KEVIN KNOX/USA TODAY SPORTS



The Case for

MLS

18

\$125 million contract he signed with the Angels in December 2012.

Due to conditions of his 2006 reinstatement, Hamilton's discipline rests in the hands of Manfred, who baseball sources say will strike a balance between compassion and punishment. Hamilton would seem to be in line for a severe suspension because of his multiple infractions from '02 through '05, but baseball sources said Manfred will weigh in Hamilton's favor his nine years of passing drug tests, his volunteering of his infraction and the structure baseball provides him.

Hamilton, who underwent right-shoulder surgery on Feb. 4, most likely will begin serving a suspension on Opening Day, even though he is expected to be physically unable to play until May. PED cheats Edinson Volquez and Freddy Galvis previously served suspensions while on the disabled list, creating the farce of a "punishment" by missing games they wouldn't have been playing in anyway.

In such cases, as with most times when drugs taint the game, outrage was warranted—but not here. With Hamilton, the number of games he must miss and when his chastisement begins are but necessary details to one of the most pitiable baseball stories ever told. □

is long gone. Over the past two years, among the 119 men who made 1,000 plate appearances, Hamilton ranked tied for 70th in OPS (.741), 88th in batting average (.255), tied for 92nd in OBP (.316) and 108th in hits (233). Those seasons coincided with the start of a five-year,

GO FIGURE

30

Points scored by **Xavier Rathan-Mayes** of Florida State in the final 4:38 of an 81-77 loss at

Miami on Feb. 25. Rathan-Mayes, who had scored only five points when his barrage started, hit eight straight shots from the field, including six three-pointers, and eight free throws.



\$250,000



► Value of the NASCAR ride belonging to Travis Kvapil that was stolen with his trailer before last weekend's race in Atlanta. The car was found 21 hours later unharmed, but by then Kvapil had been forced to miss the QuikTrip 500, which was won by Jimmie Johnson.

\$13.52

AMOUNT OF MONEY, IN ROYALTIES, BRAVES PITCHING COACH

ROGER MCDOWELL GETS EVERY TIME THE 1991 EPISODE OF *SEINFELD* IN WHICH HE APPEARED AIRS. MCDOWELL, A FORMER METS PITCHER, PLAYED HIMSELF ON THE SITCOM.



» 900

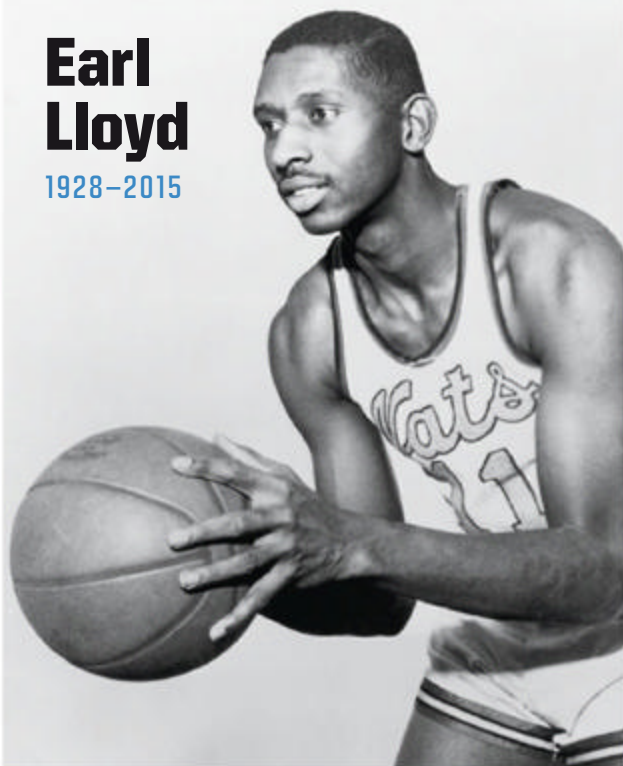
Score rolled by **Hakim Emmanuel**, 38, of Stoughton,

Mass., on Feb. 25. According to the U.S. Bowling Congress, it was just the 27th time a bowler had rolled a 900, or three consecutive perfect games. Emmanuel made 36 strikes in a row at Westgate Lanes in Brockton, Mass.



Earl Lloyd

1928–2015



ALTHOUGH HE WAS the NBA's first African-American player, Earl Lloyd never felt he deserved to be called the Jackie Robinson of pro basketball. He took what he once called "polite umbrage" at the title because it was only by virtue of the schedule that he suited up for the Washington Capitols on Oct. 31, 1950, one day before the Celtics' Chuck Cooper became the league's second African-American player.

But Lloyd, who died last week at age 86, didn't have it easy. In the pros he faced the stereotype that black players were mostly useful for their brawn, not for their skills. At 6' 5" and 200 pounds, his role was to battle under the boards and shoot only rarely, which was one reason for his modest 8.4 points-per-game output. But he was valuable enough to last nine seasons in the league, and he and teammate Jim Tucker became the first African-American players to win an NBA title, with the Syracuse Nationals in 1955. In '71 he became the Pistons' coach, making him the first African-American hired exclusively for that job—the Celtics' Bill Russell had been a player-coach—in league history. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2003.

Even after that honor Lloyd tended to downplay his status as a pioneer. Several years ago a young African-American player approached Lloyd and said he was indebted to him for opening doors for later generations of black players. Lloyd, humble to the end, replied that the young man owed him absolutely nothing. There are thousands of players who would no doubt disagree.

—Phil Taylor

Anthony Mason

1966–2015

I GOT THE text from my son while riding the subway Saturday morning: "You have to find the time to write about Mase." I was on the 2 train, and I would soon pull into Penn Station and be under Madison Square Garden before barreling on to my destination. That seemed appropriate.

Anthony Mason has gotten to his destination, at 48, years before he should have. And I know why my son thought news of his death from heart failure would hit me hard. For one thing, I'm 48 too. For another, Mase

meant something to me. He embodied so many ideals I hold in high regard—like channeling inner strength to chase an impossible dream, working with focus to deny the naysayers and making everyone around you better.

Mase was also a symbol of New York's toughness in the 1990s. When he walked onto the basketball court with Patrick Ewing, John Starks and the rest, they were not going to walk off until they had given their entire bodies to the cause. I sat up close in those years, as a basketball-obsessed season-ticket holder, so I saw and felt the sweat equity they put into playing the game.

Knicks fans are a funny group. When we grouse about the current roster, we often



compare it with the teams we're most proud of, the champs of 1970 and '73. After that, it's always Bernard. Then Mason and Starks. We still care about them. A lot. Because those guys cared about us and tried, with everything they had, to win for us.

At the beginning of this season I decided to boycott the Knicks. I haven't watched the games. And I promised myself I wouldn't write one word about them. Because they're not worth it.

But Anthony Mason is.

So thanks, Mase. None of us who watched you play, who wondered aloud how such a hard man could have such a soft touch, will ever forget what we saw you do. For us. Rest in peace, big.

—Brian Koppelman

EXTRA MUSTARD

Spring Dings

Some of baseball's most bizarre injuries—including three this year—happen before the season even starts

1

David Price*Rays*

March 8, 2012

Leaves start due to neck spasms brought on by drying himself with a towel.

3

Hunter Pence*Astros*

Feb. 18, 2008

Cuts hands and knees after falling through a glass door he didn't realize was closed.

5

Michael Saunders*Blue Jays*

Feb. 25, 2015

Steps on outfield sprinkler head, tears cartilage in left knee.

2

Ronald Belisario*Rays*

2014-15 Off-Season

Righty fractures his left shoulder on an undisclosed date while getting out of a swimming pool in native Venezuela.

4

Josh Outman*Rockies*

April 4, 2012

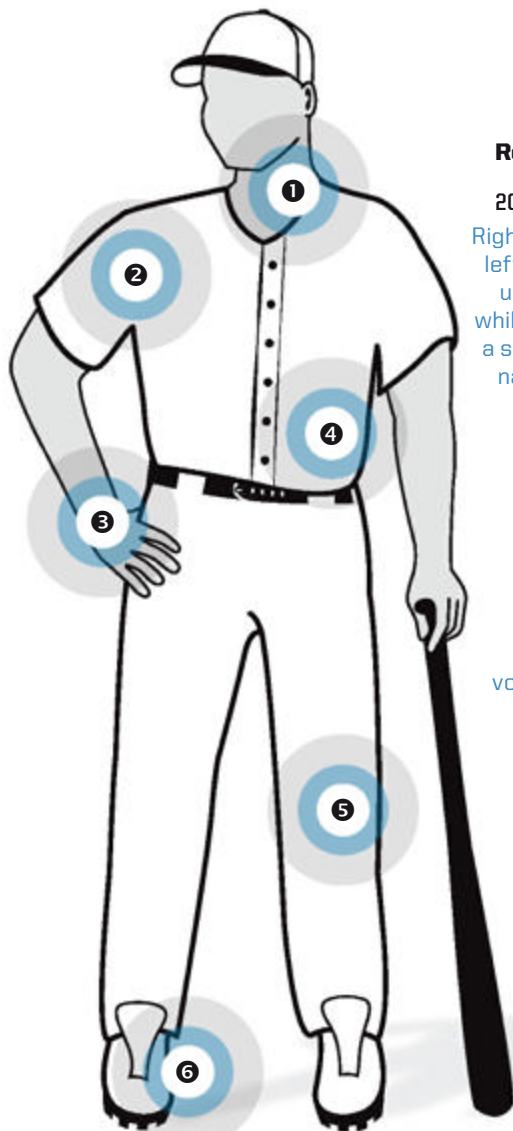
Strains oblique because of excessive vomiting brought on by food poisoning.

6

Chris Sale*White Sox*

Feb. 27, 2015

Ace lefty injures foot stepping off back of his truck.



BREAKOUT PERFORMER

HOT

Russell Westbrook

First NBA player to get three straight triple doubles and a dent in the side of his face in one week.

Jaromir Jagr

NHL's oldest player traded to Panthers. No one told him you're supposed to move to Florida after you retire.

Taylor Price

Wins American Rodeo for bareback, pockets \$600,000. Horse just gets taken for a ride.

Marshawn Lynch

Tells Istanbul TV reporter he was surprised he didn't get ball at end of Super Bowl. Turns out with some media members he's a Turkish delight.

BIG

Considering restoring freshman ineligibility. In related news, no high school recruits are considering Big Ten schools.

NOT

SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE

A neighbor of the Orioles' spring training site in Sarasota, Fla., called police with a noise complaint after the team practiced with recorded crowd noise.



THEY
SAID IT

"I can feel sorry for him because he's so stupid. But I can't really feel very sorry for him."

Former MLB commissioner Fay Vincent on Alex Rodriguez, who returned to Yankees camp after serving a record 162-game ban for PED-related offenses.



Jacqueline Pollard | *Alta, Utah* | *Free Skiing*

Jacqueline, a senior at Waterford High in Sandy and a member of the Alta/Snowbird Freeride team, won the girls' division at the Freeride Junior World Championships in Grandvalira, Andorra. She scored 82.25 points to defeat a field of 12 skiers from seven countries, including defending champ Illona Carlod of France.



Dylan Missry | *Holbrook, N.Y.* | *Volleyball*

Dylan, a 6' 4" senior outside hitter at Sachem High North, had 36 kills in the Class A state final, a 3-1 victory over Rochester's McQuaid Jesuit High. Last month he led the Long Island Volleyball Club to first at the Chicago Boys' Winter Championships and at the Nittany Ninvitational, and to second at the SCVA Junior Boys' Invitational. Dylan will play at UCLA.



McKenna Newsum-Schoenberg | *Centennial, Colo.* | *Swimming*

Newsum-Schoenberg, a senior at Emory, won the 1,650-yard freestyle [16:54.47] and set a University Athletic Association record in the 500 free [4:52.13]. She set another conference mark in the 200 fly prelims [2:01.52], then placed third in the finals, helping the Eagles win a 17th straight UAA title. She was named the league's swimmer of the year.

FACES IN THE CROWD

Edited By
**ALEXANDRA
FENWICK**



J'den Cox | *Columbia, Mo.* | *Wrestling*

Cox, a sophomore at Missouri and the defending national champ at 197 pounds, defeated Nathan Burak 4-3 to clinch an 18-12 victory over No. 1 Iowa and the National Duals Finals championship. The dual-meet win was an NCAA-leading 50th straight for Cox, who finished the regular season with a 30-0 record for the 24-0 Tigers.



Megan Gustafson | *Port Wing, Wis.* | *Basketball*

Megan, a 6' 3" senior forward at South Shore High, scored 46 points in an 81-45 win over Chequamegon High to become the state's alltime leader with 2,917 points, surpassing the mark of 2,881 set in 2004. She led the state with 40.6 points and 19.0 rebounds per game at week's end and had run her scoring total to 3,118. Megan will play at Iowa.



James Wreh II | *Cambridge, Mass.* | *Indoor Track*
Kcaysha Medas-King | *Queens, N.Y.* | *Indoor Track*

James, a third-grader at St. Peter School, won the boys' 55-meter dash in 8.11 seconds at the 108th NYRR Millrose Games in New York City; Kcaysha, a third-grader at P.S. 220 Edward Mandel School, won the girls' race in 8.48.

Nominate Now ▼

To submit a candidate for Faces in the Crowd, go to SI.com/faces.
For more on outstanding amateur athletes, follow [@SI_Faces](https://twitter.com/SI_Faces) on Twitter



Just My Type

→ Interview by **DAN PATRICK**

DAN PATRICK: Did you realize that Steve Nash has one more assist (10,335) than you for third on the alltime list?

MARK JACKSON: Yes, I am well aware of it. I'm actually contemplating getting in shape and signing a 10-day [contract] with some team and just playing for a minute, throwing some look-aways to get ahead of Nash.

DP: How did you feel when you passed Magic Johnson?

MJ: With all due respect to everyone on the list, Magic Johnson is the greatest point guard to ever play the game. When I passed him, it was an unbelievable feeling.

DP: If I gave you a choice of starting a team with Stephen Curry, Russell Westbrook or James Harden, who do you take?

MJ: I'll say this, the way Westbrook is playing right now is absolutely incredible. He could well be the best player if you took LeBron out of the equation.

DP: Do we not vote for LeBron for MVP just because we want a different story?

MJ: We take LeBron's greatness for granted because we witness it time and time again, but he's the best small forward to ever play the game. Still, we want to fall in love [with someone else].

DP: Did you see that LeBron is upset that his 10-year-old is



MARK JACKSON

DISHING IT OUT

Now that he has returned to his gig as an NBA broadcaster on ESPN, the All-Star point guard and former Warriors coach is doling out wisdom as frequently as he once did assists.

receiving scholarship offers?

MJ: I totally agree [with him]. Leave these young kids alone. Allow them to develop into young men. If we're going to [recruit kids], let them come out of high school [and play in the NBA].

DP: What did you think of the Mavericks' suspending Rajon Rondo for a game for yelling at coach Rick Carlisle? Rondo has a history.

MJ: Rondo does have a history, but in fairness so does Carlisle, who is a great coach and one of the best in the business. I don't think it's ever fair for a player to cuss out a coach. And I don't think it's ever fair for a coach to cuss out a player. I think there's enough blame for both of them. From what we've been told and what we saw that night, I don't think it was fair to suspend Rondo.

DP: Did any player ever do that to you?

MJ: No, that would never be an issue. Coming in, I'm letting them know that we're going to respect each other as men. Rondo is a father, a husband and a grown man. I can talk to him.

DP: Rondo had problems with Doc Rivers as well.

MJ: There are different styles of coaching. I'm just telling you what worked for me. I played on teams with coaches who would cuss you out. I saw a guy get suspended by a coach who cussed him out and disrespected him. [The player] talked back and they suspended him. □

Guest Shots Say What?



ESPN's **Brent Musburger** wasn't

scared when Kansas State fans rushed the court after beating Kansas, but he told me that something else did give him pause. "As I'm trying to throw it to *SportsCenter*, a woman reached over and took a selfie. It's the first time I've been live on television when somebody took a selfie." ... Unlike Mark



Jackson, CBS basketball analyst

Doug Gottlieb has no problem with a coach like Vanderbilt's Kevin Stallings cursing out a player for taunting. "It's a sign of the times," Gottlieb said to me. "We criticize the coach or teacher more than the pupil who stepped out of line."



... Actor **Will Forte** explained to me

why he became a Clippers fan in the 1990s—before it was fashionable. "I got a ton of T-shirts," he said. "They would shoot them up [into the crowd] with a T-shirt gun. Nobody else was up there [to get them]."

The Case for . . . MLS

BY GRANT WAHL



MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

is set to begin its 20th season on March 6, which in itself is an achievement, considering that's three seasons longer than Pelé's old NASL lasted before croaking in 1984. And while MLS is still years (decades?) away from challenging the supremacy of its top European counterparts, the U.S. league is here to stay, and it's moving in the right direction.

The league is expanding, too, growing to 20 teams in 2015 with the additions of Orlando City and New York City FC. Fourteen of those 20 teams are playing in soccer-specific stadiums and two more venues are on the way. MLS set a league record with an average attendance of 19,151 last season and figures to go over 20,000 this season.

The league still faces plenty of challenges. Television ratings have been minuscule, though there's renewed optimism thanks to the current eight-year, \$720 million TV deal, shared with U.S. Soccer, with ESPN, Fox Sports and Univision that includes weekly doubleheaders in Sunday-night time slots on ESPN2 and Fox Sports 1. As of Monday night there remained the specter of MLS's first-ever work stoppage, with the players saying they'd go on strike this week if the owners don't grant them free agency within the league. A shutdown would be bad, of course, but a

lengthy one appeared unlikely because players don't have the financial means to withstand a long strike. At the very least, labor struggles suggest that there's finally enough money worth fighting for.

MLS aspires to become one of the world's top leagues: Commissioner Don Garber, now in his 16th year, says he wants to get there by 2022. That's an extremely ambitious goal, not least because MLS's TV money is now locked in for that time period. Still, MLS is trying. One strategy has been dropping millions to sign the best U.S. national-team players over the past year and a half, including Jozy Altidore and Michael Bradley (Toronto), Clint Dempsey (Seattle) and Jermaine Jones (New England). Whether that's good or bad for the national team—coach Jurgen Klinsmann has said he thinks players would benefit from being in Europe—is another debate, but there's no doubt that it's an upgrade for MLS.

As for star power, while MLS has lost some of its marquee players in their 30s (like the retired Landon Donovan

and Thierry Henry), others will join the league this year, including Kaká (Orlando) and Frank Lampard (NYCFC). The true measure of whether MLS becomes one of the world's top leagues will be its ability to develop world-class players from a young age and attract elite international stars in their prime. Those efforts have a long way to go, but MLS says its teams are investing \$30 million a year in youth academies, and Toronto's signing of 28-year-old Italian national-team forward Sebastian Giovinco from Juventus is an indicator of what could lie ahead.

Is the quality of play in MLS as high as what we see in the English Premier League? Nope. But on most nights it isn't bad, and it continues to improve. And unlike the top European leagues, where only two or three teams have a chance to win the title, MLS has more parity as a result of its salary cap.

MLS is hardly perfect, but it is a 1990s sports startup that has survived, put down roots and charted an ambitious course for the future. And that's not a small thing. □



20

Seasons for
MLS, making
it the longest-
running soccer
league in U.S.
history.

19,151

Average
attendance at
MLS games
last season, a
league record.

147

Career goals
for Chelsea
by midfielder
Frank
Lampard, the
most in that
club's history.
Lampard
is joining
New York FC
this season.

+
A NEW SERIES FROM
THE EDITORS OF
FORTUNE
AND
Sports Illustrated

+ PRO-FILES

FROM THE FIELD TO THE BOARDROOM. ATHLETES THAT MADE IT BIG IN BUSINESS.

CAL RIPKEN JR.



JOHN ELWAY



ROGER STAUBACH



JOHN STALLWORTH



JACK NICKLAUS

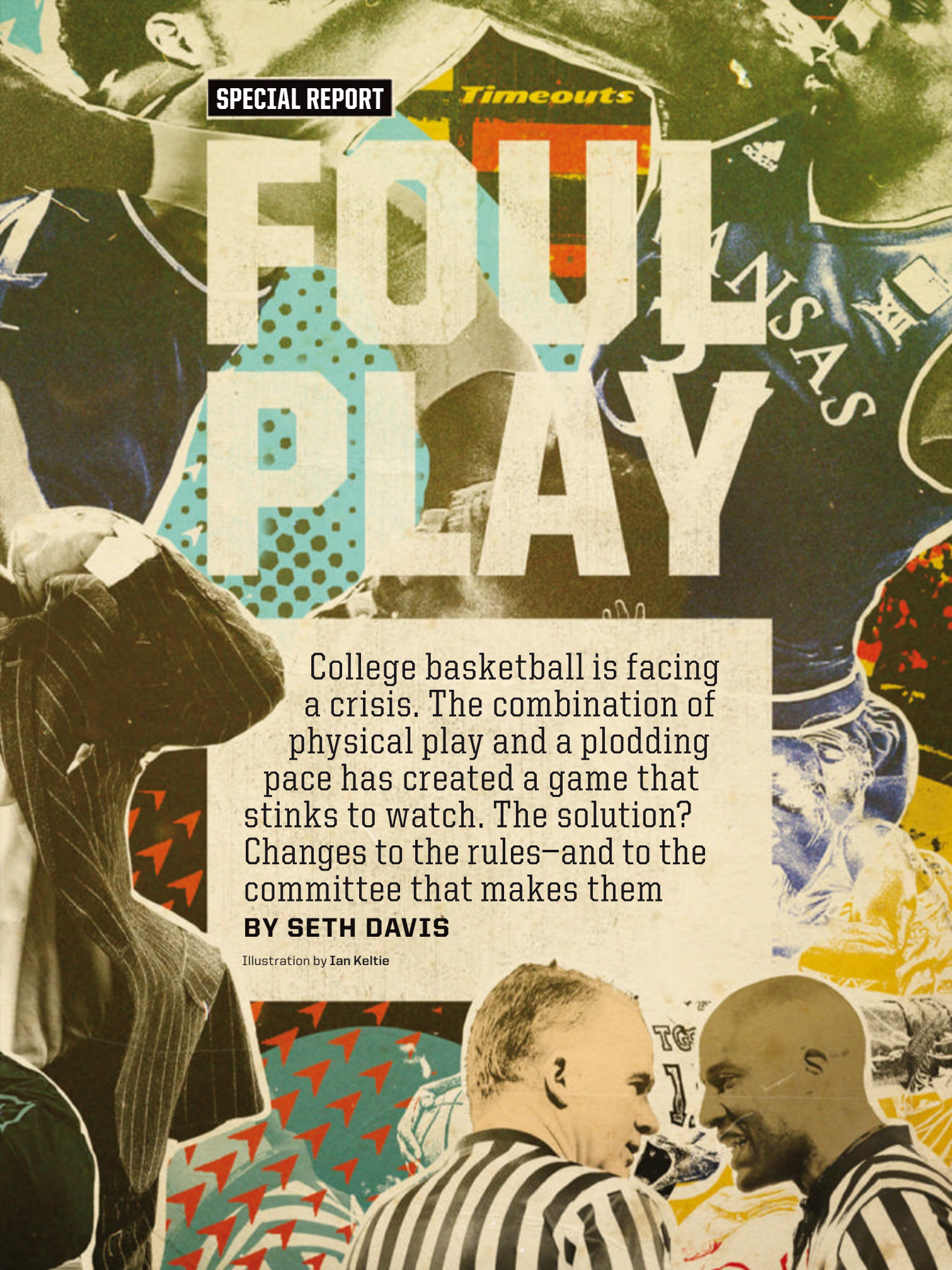


For the full series of Pro-Files videos & articles go to:
si.com/pro-files or **fortune.com/pro-files**

FOULS



**LOW
SCORES**



SPECIAL REPORT

FOWL PLAY

College basketball is facing a crisis. The combination of physical play and a plodding pace has created a game that stinks to watch. The solution? Changes to the rules—and to the committee that makes them

BY SETH DAVIS

Illustration by Ian Keltie



GONZAGA HAS BEEN one of the best offensive teams in the country this season, but you wouldn't have known it by watching the Bulldogs play at home against San Diego last Thursday night. The No. 3 Zags came into the game ranked seventh in the U.S. in points per game (79.7), first in field goal percentage (52.7) and third in offensive efficiency (1.21 points per possession). Yet thanks largely to the Toreros' insistence on slowing the pace and playing physical defense, Gonzaga scored a whopping 13 points in the first 17 minutes. The Zags led 22–17 at the half and went on to win 59–39. The teams shot a combined 40.4% from the floor, and each played 56 possessions, well below the national average of 64.9. After the game San Diego coach Bill Grier cited “the talent discrepancy between our two programs” as the reason for his team's purposefully sluggish play. “We had to play like that,” he said.

San Diego may have gotten outscored in the end, but the real loser was college basketball. That same night, Arizona State put up just nine points in the first half of its 83–41 loss at No. 13 Utah. The night before, No. 22 VCU, which is known for its high-octane, helter-skelter pressure, needed two overtimes to crack the 60-point barrier before losing at Richmond by four. On Tuesday there were six games involving Top 25 teams, and in two the winner scored fewer than 60 points. In a third, No. 9 Notre Dame lost at home to Syracuse 65–60. Yet even that was preferable to No. 17 Louisville's nails-on-a-chalkboard squeaker over lowly Georgia Tech 52–51 the night before.

The 2014–15 season is shaping up to be the worst offensive season in modern college basketball history. Through Sunday teams were averaging 67.56 points, or the second fewest since 1952. The low for a season (67.50) was set just two years ago, after which the rules committee clamped down on physical defense and made it harder to draw a charge. Thanks to officials' lax enforcement of the guidelines established to limit overly physical defense, as well as a foolish decision by the rules committee to reverse the block/charge modification, scoring has declined by 3.44 points per game—the steepest single-season drop since '57–'58. Moreover, the pace of games is the slowest since efficiency maven Ken Pomeroy started tracking tempo in 2001–02. That season, teams averaged 69.6 possessions per 40 minutes; at week's end they were averaging 64.9. Points per possession were down 2.9% from 2013–14, according to KPISports.net, while turnovers were up 5.4% per possession.

The numbers confirm what the fans already see: College basketball is facing a crisis. It's time for an extreme makeover.

WHILE NO one disputes the data, most explanations center on two myths.

1) *The players aren't as good as they used to be.* The one-and-done rule has been vilified, but don't forget: Before the NBA established its 19-year-old age minimum in 2005, the rule was *none* and done, so there are more gifted players in college basketball now, not fewer. Also, just 42 underclassmen entered the



RUN 'N' FUN

Oklahoma's Jordan Woodard (10) helped push the ball against Iowa State in a rare high-scoring game.

2014 NBA draft. Nine were freshmen. That is not nearly enough to account for a decline measured across nearly 4,500 Division I players over some 8,000 games.

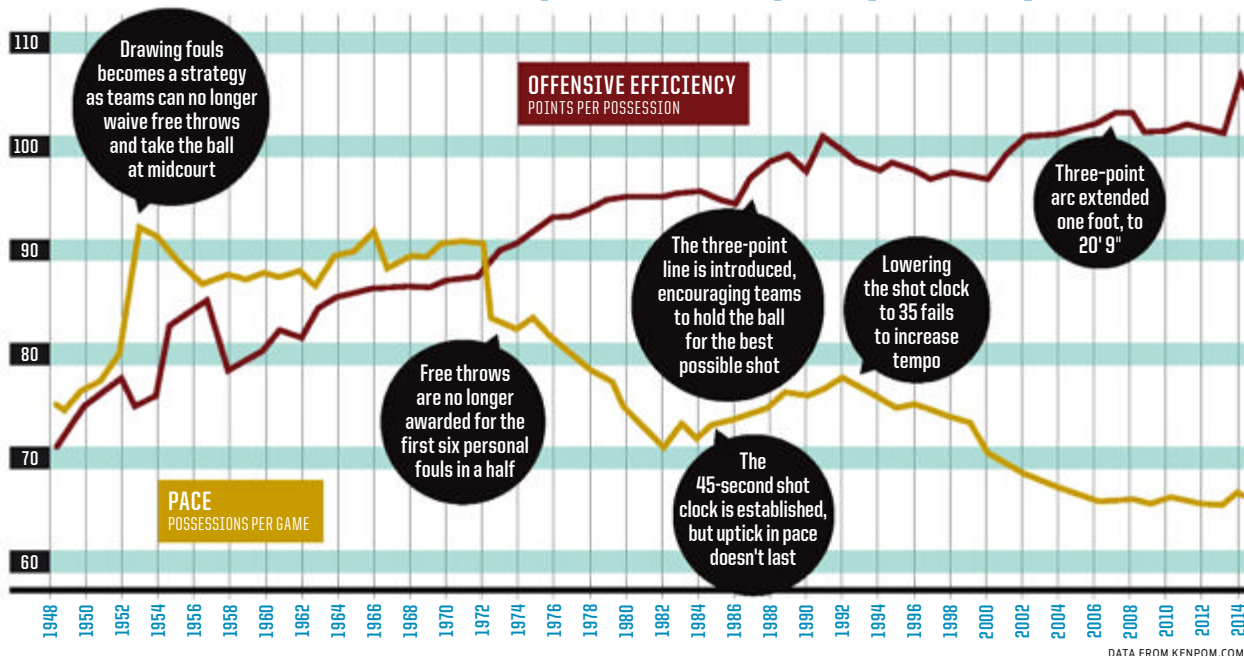
While it is difficult to measure skills in different eras, especially before and after the three-point line was implemented in 1986–87, there is one category in which an apples-to-apples comparison is possible: free throw shooting. If players really are worse, there would be a significant decline from the line. Yet in 1972–73, when scoring peaked at 77.7 points per game—without a shot clock or three-point line, mind you—teams converted 68.6% of their foul shots. This season teams are making 69.0%. There is nothing wrong with the way today's players shoot.

2) *The officiating isn't as good as it used to be.* Say what you want about the refs, at least they have been consistent. According to the NCAA's statistics dating back to 1947–48, the number of fouls committed per team per game has varied the least among all categories. Since 1953–54, that average has never dropped below 18.1 or risen above 20.6.

The primary reason for this crisis, then, isn't the players or referees. It's the coaches.

Possession Obsession

The rules have evolved to reward drawing fouls and making extra passes for open threes



Consider the rare case of Iowa State at Oklahoma on Feb. 9. The score at halftime was 46–46. The Sooners went on to win 94–83. The teams combined to shoot 49.2% from the field and 48.0% from three-point range. They each had 73 possessions, and a combined 26 fouls led to only 20 free throws. Yes, these are two Top 25 teams, but it's not like there was a surfeit of talent on the floor that night. Only one player, Oklahoma guard Buddy Hield, is likely to be drafted by the NBA in 2015, and he's projected to be a mid-second-rounder.

The game was fun to watch because the two coaches, the Sooners' Lon Kruger and the Cyclones' Fred Hoiberg, give their players the freedom to create points. It's no coincidence that both men have NBA backgrounds: Kruger coached the Hawks for three years and spent a season as an assistant with the Knicks, and Hoiberg had a 10-year career as a guard for three teams.

It's impossible to legislate offensive creativity, of course, but rules that help improve the flow of the game will encourage coaches to consider a more up-tempo style of play (page 24). We can't change the rules of the game, however, until we change the

way rules get made. Or in this case, the way rules *don't* get made.

Start with the makeup of the 12-member rules committee. Because the rule book applies to all three divisions, three seats go to Division II schools and another three to D-III programs. Of the six spots allocated for Division I, five are currently held by representatives of mid-majors: Belmont coach Rick Byrd (the current chair), Marshall associate athletic director Jeff O'Malley, Akron coach Keith Dambrot, Long Island University coach Jack Perri and Fairfield coach Sydney Johnson. The 12th member is Karl Hicks, the deputy athletic director at Florida State. Marinate on that for a moment: Just one out of the 12 men on the rules committee is a member of a Power Five conference.

Though the people who serve on the rules committee are no doubt earnest and diligent, they are naturally protective of their own interests. A slower, rougher game benefits teams with lesser talent. Byrd, for example, says he likes a 35-second shot clock because "I don't think you can really run your offense in 30 seconds," even though most of the planet seems to be able to do just that.

And what do you do if you're a coach whose players aren't quick and tall enough to prevent the gazelles at Kansas and North Carolina from driving through the lane and finishing at the rim? You manipulate the rule book so it's easier to push a driver, bump a cutter or draw a charge.

The game thrives on upsets, of course, but they should happen because the underdogs executed better, not because they were allowed to grab their speedier opponents. "I hear people complain and say, 'Well, if you do these things, the teams with the better players are going to win,'" ESPN analyst Jay Bilas says. "And I'm thinking, Did you really just say that? That's like saying if we took all the sprinters and let them run

in a straight line, the fastest guy would win. That's the whole point."

The representatives from Divisions II and III also have cost concerns that the elite D-I schools don't have. Proposals to redraw the three-point line or widen the lane have met resistance partly because the lower divisions were wary of spending the money. "When we first talked about putting in the arc [to assist with block/charge calls], the D-II and the D-III guys were saying, 'Damn, that's expensive.' That was holding stuff up," says Notre Dame coach Mike Brey, who served on the committee from 2006 to '10 and was chairman in his final year.

It is critical, then, that the committee be restructured. The schools that are on television every night should have the most say. This is the same thinking that led the Power Five conferences to push through the "autonomy legislation," which has enabled them to do things like covering the full cost of attendance for their athletes, an idea that had previously been nixed by schools who couldn't afford it.

Having coaches make up the majority of the rules committee has also proved to be a bad idea. They're always going to be more inclined to protect their competitive interests than to improve the aesthetics of the game. Their undue influence is reflected in the response to the annual rules survey. The committee polls five groups: commissioners, referee coordinators, referees, media and coaches. Last year, when the survey asked whether the number of timeouts should be reduced, a strong majority of all the groups agreed that they should. Except for the coaches—74.3% of them disagreed. Coaches were also the only group that objected to the suggestion that only players should be allowed to call a timeout. On both questions, the coaches held sway. And the glut of timeouts has made the last few minutes of close games seem interminable. "Coaches have always felt that if you take timeouts away from them, it's like taking their firstborn," says Art Hyland, the rules committee's secretary editor.

I T'S NOT AS IF an imbalance in favor of the defense were a new problem. This has been faced, and solved, by just about every major sport. Over the last two decades, for example, the NFL and college football have greatly diminished the degree to which defenders can impede the progress of receivers, and they have outlawed excessive hits on quarterbacks. That begat the

"Anything you can do to increase movement is going to increase scoring," says Smart.

TRAFFIC JAM

Widening the lane and extending the block/charge arc would unclog an area that's been hard for referees to manage.

spread offense and the wide-open, pass-happy, no-huddle, high-scoring games that electrify football fans every fall weekend. Likewise, the NHL instituted a slew of rules following the 2004–05 work stoppage, including clamping down on obstruction, allowing two-line passes and installing a trapezoid behind the net to curtail a goalie's ability to play the puck.

The NBA offers an even better blueprint. Before the start of the 2000–01 season, then commissioner David Stern tapped Jerry Colangelo, the general manager of the Suns, to chair a special committee that was assigned to eliminate "all the muggings," as Colangelo puts it. They devised prohibitions against hand-checking and other tactics that had tipped the advantage too far to the defense.

Fast Fixes

Five rule changes that can help reverse the downward trend in scoring, cut down on contact, increase movement and speed up the game

1 REDUCE THE SHOT CLOCK

Take it from 35 seconds to 30—or maybe even 24. "It's not hard," says Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski. "A shorter clock means more possessions, and more possessions mean more points."

2 EXTEND THE ARC UNDER THE BASKET

A three-foot arc was added in 2011–12 to help

officials decide the block/charge call under the hoop; in the pros the arc is four feet out. "That's the NCAA and our coaches saying we are not going to be the NBA," says Michigan State coach Tom Izzo. "It's a joke." The extra foot would pull help-side defenders further from the basket, thus unclogging the paint.

3 WIDEN THE LANE

Increasing the width to 14 feet (from 12) would push post players away from the basket and force them to learn to shoot with touch instead of just backing down and powering to the rim. Drivers would also have more space, allowing players to better showcase their athleticism.



There were many games that got bogged down in fouls early on, but eventually the coaches and players adapted.

Colangelo, who is now the chairman of USA Basketball's board of directors, believes the college game needs to go through the same transition. "Basketball is a game of fluidity," he says. "It took about two years for everyone to adjust, but that dissipates over a period of time. You pay that price, but in the long term that's what was in the best interests of the game."

ORLIN WAGNER/AP (WEBER)



Those who have coached college players for U.S. teams in recent years swear that when American kids play in FIBA tournaments, they score points. They make shots. They're rewarded for beating their man off the dribble. Turns out all they need is a shorter clock, more space and a tighter whistle. "Anything you can do to increase freedom of movement is going to increase scoring," says VCU coach Shaka Smart, who has served as an assistant for USA Basketball's under-18 and under-19 teams for the last three years. "The players figured out how to play with the 24-second shot clock. We as coaches did too, because you can't run too many multiple sets. If you really want to increase scoring, you have to make the rules more to the advantage of the offense as opposed to the unbelievable advantage the defense has right now."

To be fair, the NBA has the luxury of a full-time staff of referees who have to call games for only 30 teams. That makes it easier to establish a top-down set of rules and hold officials accountable if they don't enforce those rules properly. For many years the NCAA has been urged to adopt a similar arrangement, instead of the current system under which each official is an independent contractor shuffling between conferences. The idea has been dismissed as too expensive—it would mean providing health insurance, for example—but it is starting to gain traction. Many conferences already have agreements with other leagues to share referees. Is it so impossible for the Power Five to band together, perhaps along with the Big East and Atlantic 10, and assemble a permanent staff? "It's already happening regionally. I don't think it's a big step to make it more of a national program," says Dan Gavitt, the NCAA's VP of championships. "But it takes the will of the membership to do that."

In the end the biggest problem college basketball faces is complacency. Usually it takes a hard hit to the financial bottom line to spur significant change, but that won't happen while the strongest conferences are locked into long-term, lucrative television contracts. Yet there's no doubt this crisis is real. And until the pace of change speeds up dramatically, this once-beautiful game will slowly but steadily grind to a halt. □

SI.COM

For an expanded version of this story, as well as other proposals to fix college hoops, go to SI.com/cbb

4 MOVE BACK THE THREE-POINT LINE

The goal isn't to make the shot more difficult, it's to create more space. If the committee pushed the line from 20' to 22' 2", which is where FIBA has it, that would give players more room to operate and be shorter than the NBA's distance of 23' 9".



5 LIMIT TIMEOUTS

Even before a coach such as Kansas State's Bruce Weber (left) calls a single timeout, he is guaranteed nine stoppages of play—four media timeouts per half, which last 2:15 each, plus a 15-minute halftime. That's 33 minutes, or almost another game, for him to talk to his team.

Yet on top of those breaks a coach is also granted one 60-second and four 30-second timeouts, one of which is known as the "use-it-or-lose-it" timeout because teams can carry only three 30-second timeouts into the second half. In other words, the rules actually incentivize a coach to call a first-half TO. —S.D.



+

CLASH OF TITANS

The free-flowing style Wooden ran with Lew Alcindor (top left) stands in stark contrast to the scripted offenses Knight gave to Isiah Thomas (11) and Bob Wilkerson (20).

COLLEGE
BASKETBALL

KNIGHT TRUMPS WIZARD

After the curtain descended on UCLA's majestic run, it rose on an Indiana team whose muscular style became the blueprint for success. The sport hasn't been the same since

*"The team that makes the most mistakes will probably win." —WARD (PIGGY) LAMBERT
Purdue coach (1916-17, '18-19 through '45-46)*

*"Victory favors the team making the fewest mistakes." —BOB KNIGHT
Indiana coach (1971-72 through 1999-2000)*



THE GRIND IS REAL. College basketball, in 2014-15, is being played at the slowest pace in the recorded history of the sport. Yet no consensus exists as to why tempo has been on a general decline since the mid-1970s and why the implementation of 45- and 35-second shot clocks failed to stop it. This is my attempt at a Unified Theory of How Things Got So Damn Slow. It's based on the premises that coaches dictate style and that, among coaches, there have been a few great influencers and a great many followers.

A logical place to start: the fall of 1975. The season before, John Wooden won his 10th title at UCLA

BY LUKE WINN

Illustration by
Ian Keltie

and the average tempo was near its alltime peak, at 82.7 possessions per game. (It's 64.9 now.) Wooden's retirement marked the end of a dynasty and the beginning of the sport's riding its brakes. In the 1930s, Wooden had been a point guard at Purdue under Lambert, who believed in the creative freedom of fast-break basketball and viewed mistakes as an acceptable cost of letting his players thrive in the speed game. With the Bruins, Wooden was an offense-first coach who prioritized the fast break over all else—and did so because *it was pleasing to watch*. "It is my feeling that the fans prefer and deserve to see as much action as is compatible with good play," Wooden wrote in his book *Practical Modern Basketball*, adding that he felt the need to be especially exciting in a town where he was in competition with the weather. "The ball control and stalling type of game can be excellent basketball, perhaps the very best,

but I am convinced that the game would gradually, but surely, lose its popularity if all teams used that style of play.”

That advice, despite coming from the Great Dispenser of Hoop Wisdom, was largely tuned out. Wooden’s philosophy of micromanaging skill development and preparation (down to the snugness of his players’ socks) while being laissez-faire during games was empowering, and former Bruins star Bill Walton has described the way UCLA flowed on offense as being “like a dance.” But Wooden’s blueprint wasn’t easily replicated. For the dance to be balletic, great talent was required, and no coach was going to be able to recruit the way Wooden did during his reign. For the have-lesses and the have-nots, it was practical to go in the opposite direction.

There is obvious symbolism in UCLA’s first game after Wooden retired: a 20-point loss to Indiana and Knight on Nov. 29, 1975—the opener of the last undefeated season in men’s college basketball history. The Hoosiers’ pressure man-to-man defense was so physical that a Bruins assistant scouting them during their preseason games lamented, “They’ve got five guys fouling at the same time, and it’s hard for the officials to pick out one man.” While Knight let his most talented IU teams run, his overarching philosophy was one of control: of using defensive aggression to take away opponents’ preferred options; of taking help D to a new level by teaching that the top priority for all five players was stopping the ball; of mandating a deliberate hunt for shots *he* wanted on offense, because as he wrote in a book co-written with mentor Pete Newell, “We don’t have any trust in the young player’s ability to determine shot selection.”

Knight had signs in his locker room that said MOVEMENT + PATIENCE = BASKETS and VICTORY FAVORS THE TEAM THAT MAKES THE FEWEST MISTAKES. And in his second season in Bloomington, when he saw a sign at a team banquet that said GOOD LUCK TO COACH KNIGHT AND THE HURRYIN’ HOOSIERS—the nickname IU had in its days under Branch McCracken, who was like Lambert a fast-break-and-mistake enthusiast—Knight said of whoever wrote it, “That guy’s got to be the most optimistic man in Indiana.”

West Point was where Knight had established himself as the country’s preeminent defensive grinder, from 1965–66 to ’70–71. He molded low-talent Army teams into improbable winners; the bard Al McGuire described those teams as being “like a little dog that grabs hold of your



McGuire described Knight’s teams as being “like a little dog that grabs hold of your leg and won’t let go.”



DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

Knight gave scores of clinics on his defensive philosophy, and devotees snapped up his step-by-step guide for replicating Indiana’s success.



leg and won’t let go.” When Knight took Army to the NIT Final Four in ’70, Pete Maravich and LSU were in the other semifinal; the most prolific scorer in the game’s history was a senior, on his way out, and the most important defensive coach in the game’s history was beginning his rise. That the major decline in the sport’s tempo coincided with the period during which Knight was the face of coaching—the ’70s and ’80s—was not a coincidence. His blueprint of pressure, help and mistake avoidance was initially devised for an extreme underdog, and thus was transferable to programs at every level.

And while Knight had issues—with his temper, with his language, with four-legged plastic projectiles—selfishness with his concepts was not one of them. He was the most sought-after clinic speaker of that era, and in conjunction with his lectures, he sold pamphlets entitled *Let’s Play Defense*, with an illustration of a devil (horns, tail, claws, steam spewing from nostrils) in a defensive stance on the cover. The 37-page booklet diagrammed Knight’s man-to-man D, as well as the drills necessary to implement it. One of the few photos inside was of a young Mike Krzyzewski in an Army practice uniform, demonstrating proper technique. Coach K has won 1,009

What did you give more thought: covering the spread or covering your \$40,000 car?

Researching insurance may not be your idea of a good time, but picking the right one could save you a world of hurt down the road.

Like if you have **Accident Forgiveness**, Liberty Mutual won't raise your rates due to your first accident.



You could save up to \$423 now.
For a free quote, visit libertymutual.com/si
or call 844.766.8058.



games (and counting) and become the next face of college coaching. Among the hundreds (and possibly thousands) of coaches who became converts after throwing down a buck or two for *Let's Play Defense* were Philadelphia University's Herb Magee, the other coach who surpassed the 1,000-win mark this season; Steve Fisher, whose San Diego State team ranks third in defensive efficiency (and 317th in tempo); and a Wisconsin high school coach named Dick Bennett, who made it his mission to attend every possible Knight clinic.

Bennett's eventual success at D-III Wisconsin-Stevens Point was built on Knight's pressure principles. And when Bennett developed his own signature D—the Pack-Line—to win with an underdog at Wisconsin-Green Bay in the mid-'90s, he took Knight's idea of early help to the extreme, packing in to stop penetration, prioritizing containment over steals and sacrificing offensive rebounding in favor of preventing transition buckets. Bennett then took Wisconsin to the Final Four in 2000 using that scheme, and passed it on to his son, Tony, whose 27–1 Virginia team is ranked No. 2 nationally in defensive efficiency—and 348th in tempo, at 60.2 possessions per game. Meanwhile the team which has been ranked either No. 1 or 2 in offensive efficiency for most of the season, Wisconsin, is 344th in tempo and thriving because it does not make mistakes: Bo Ryan's Badgers are so careful with the ball that they turn it over on just 12.2% of possessions, the lowest rate in the country. Calculating basketball, in 2014–15, is *winning* basketball. The heightened understanding of efficiency, combined with the increased video tools available to scout opponents, has teams locked in nightly chess matches—the antithesis of the fast action that Wooden believed was essential to the health of the game.

VIRGINIA IS currently allowing 50.1 points per game, which is close to the modern record of 47.2, set in 1981–82 by Fresno State. The Bulldogs' coach at the time, Boyd Grant, used a style he called “tempo programming.” Ron Adams, a young assistant who was in charge of the D, says the genius of Grant “was that he wasn't concerned about beating the teams we should beat; he was concerned about how we were going to beat the teams better than us—and so we taught a very technical brand of defense.” The Bulldogs alternated between pressure man and a confusing matchup



Teams are locked in nightly chess matches—the antithesis of the fast action Wooden believed was essential.



EARLY ADOPTERS

Krzyzewski (top left), Magee (bottom left) and Fisher (bottom right) learned from Knight, while Virginia's Bennett has improved on the scheme his father ran.

zone that took a team that was a perennial D-I cellar-dweller when Grant arrived in '77 to the NIT championship in '83.

Bennett would borrow Fresno's method of closing out—hands high, weight back—for his Pack-Line, but there were plenty of detractors. UC Irvine coach Bill Mulligan nicknamed the Bulldogs' style Vomit Basketball, and UCLA refused to schedule them for fear of alienating fans. Some coaches still believed that great defense and a fast tempo did not have to be mutually exclusive. The blueprint for this style, in 2014–15,

is the Golden State Warriors, who lead the NBA in defensive efficiency *and* possessions per game—the first team in the league's modern era to do so. The architect of the Warriors' defense is none other than Adams, who had a short stint as Fresno's coach in the mid-'80s but found his calling as a defensive-guru assistant in the NBA, where, he says, there is a “different, time-tested language and rhythm to offense and defense than in the college game.” He adapted, and now he presides over (one end) of the most exciting, freewheeling show on hardwood. This should give hope to us all: There can be life after Vomit Basketball. □

Sports Illustrated  **STORE**

Swimsuit 2015

AUTHENTIC. VINTAGE. AMERICAN-MADE.

GRAND OPENING

Get your official
SI Swimsuit brand
apparel and merchandise
inspired by this year's
*Americana-themed
Swimsuit Issue*



Dive in @ SHOP.SI.COM/SWIM

Back Issues | Swimsuit Merchandise | Commemorative Books | Cover Collection

MURRAY'S LAW

Before 2014 the 1,800-yard rushing mark had been broken 20 times, and every one of those backs returned to his team the following year. The Cowboys may end that streak when free agency begins.



Photograph by
Mike McGinnis
Getty Images

PRO FOOTBALL

YOU'RE MY 'BOY, BLUE! (TILL YOU'RE NOT)

DeMarco Murray did everything the Cowboys asked of him, and more. So how is it that the All-Pro appears headed for a breakup with Big D?

BY AUSTIN MURPHY

I**T WAS** one of DeMarco Murray's few false steps all season. After receiving the Offensive Player of the Year award at the NFL Honors show on the eve of Super Bowl XLIX, the Cowboys running back pivoted to his left in search of the presenters who would escort him offstage. But they were, in fact, standing to his *right*, resulting in an ungainly 360 and a rare negative play for the All-Pro.

Murray's minor faux pas was eclipsed by the graciousness of his acceptance speech, during which he thanked, among others, "the Jones family"—Dallas owner Jerry and executive vice president Stephen—"for taking a chance on me. . . . It's been a privilege to play there."

"Hopefully," he added, with a comic's timing, "we can continue that."

The Cowboys in the house laughed hard, just as they'd cracked up earlier in the evening when emcee Seth Meyers announced his intention to show some safe-tackling footage but instead screened slow-motion video of Jerry's and Stephen's awk-sauce man hug with New Jersey governor Chris Christie.

The laughter has long since died down at the Cowboys' Valley Ranch headquarters, and not just because, with a week to go before the start of NFL free agency, on March 10, they were still waiting, nervously, for the (inevitable? possible?) release of a video believed to show receiver Dez Bryant doing something unsavory. And while no such video had surfaced as SI went to press, its existence—rumored or otherwise—certainly did not *allay* any concerns the club might have about signing Bryant to a long-term deal, which helps explain why, on Monday, the Cowboys franchise-tagged him, at a cost of roughly \$13 million.

If the club is going to pay Dez, goes the conventional thinking, they'll probably have to part ways with Murray, whose 1,845 rushing yards in 2014 led all backs by nearly 500 yards. Jerry Jones and coach Jason Garrett have one-upped themselves in their effusive praise of Murray, but it remains to be seen whether Dallas is willing to match those words with the quantities of cash that *some* rushing-deprived team (*sidebar, page 35*) is sure to throw at this guy: a deal in the Arian Foster–LeSean McCoy neighborhood of five years, \$45 million minimum, \$20 million guaranteed.

"I do know this," says former Cowboys quarterback Babe Laufenberg, now a color analyst on Dallas radio: "Jerry has never lost a player he really wanted to keep."

Following the awards show, the Cowboys contingent filed onto Jerry's party bus, a Greyhound-sized, luxuriously appointed sin bin that whisked them away to Lon's, a high-end eatery in Scottsdale, Ariz.. There, Jones stopped by the tables of other diners, making small talk and apologizing—"Sorry if we were a little loud"—before eventually joining Murray, quarterback Tony Romo, tight end Jason Witten and the rest of their raucous cohort on the bus, a traveling billboard that combines the team-building aspects of an office party with the convenience of a designated driver. It is, in short, an idea whose time has come.

It may also be time, non-Cowboys partisans, to set down your stein of Haterade and admit that Jones, now 72, has been on a bit of a roll lately. Old Jerry, '90s Jerry, may have come off sometimes as a showman, a huckster, a carnival barker in a \$5,000 suit. New Jerry, while still a marketing genius, has about him an aura of near-gravitas. New Jerry is steadfast and farsighted, more Warren Buffett than P.T. Barnum. He's patient. Jones didn't blow up his coaching staff after three straight .500 seasons. He tinkered with it but retained his promising young coach. He didn't draft Texas A&M QB Johnny Manziel, regardless of the marketing windfall it would've reaped. ("Somebody duct-tape him to a chair," Laufenberg recalls thinking of Jones as Dallas's first-round pick

approached last May and Johnny Football remained available.) Instead, the Cowboys used the 16th pick on Notre Dame lineman Zack Martin, who became one of three Cowboys hogs to make the Pro Bowl, along with left tackle Tyron Smith and center Travis Frederick.

After paying it lip service for three years, Dallas fully committed to the run in 2014. The results were dazzling. The Cowboys rushed for 147.1 yards per game, second best in the NFL. With room and time to operate, as defenses crowded the box to stop the run, Romo turned in arguably the finest season of his 11-year career. At 34, he led the NFL in completion percentage (69.9), yards per attempt (8.5) and passer rating (113.2). Romo will be around next season—he'll count \$28 million against the cap, but hey, it's tough to begrudge that of a franchise QB—and so too will his most dangerous target, Bryant, the skywalking wideout whose talent is matched only by his volatility.

At the other end of the emotional spectrum is the stoic, low-key Murray, whom the Cowboys also failed to lock up before the start of free agency. He will now test the market—not an encouraging sign for Dallas. “If he’s going into this, he’s going into this with an open mind,” says his agent, Johnson, who remains hopeful the two parties can come together. “The Cowboys have a history of finding

STAR BRIGHT

Emmitt Smith, the most famous Cowboy (and the NFL's alltime leading rusher), never broke 377 carries or 1,773 yards in a season. Murray blew by both in his fourth year.

“Always going downhill,” Garrett says. “You thought he made four yards, but he made six. You thought he made six, but he made a first down.”

a way to keep great players, particularly when they're great people.”

Murray put up great numbers last season. But does anyone believe he's a great back? And will Dallas pay him accordingly? His absence could wound this club more deeply than it realizes. The intense, reserved and somewhat inscrutable Murray is a master of what Garrett calls, admirably, “dirty runs,” the guy who did more than any other player to infuse this offense with its identity. The 2014 Cowboys played with a gritty, borderline-nasty rep that they've been missing for two decades, since Emmitt Smith was slicing through holes opened by such ill-tempered behemoths as Larry Allen, Erik Williams, Nate Newton and Kevin Gogan, a player so dirty that he was once ejected from a Pro Bowl.

Granted, Murray doesn't look particularly imposing, unless he's glowering—he's a private person disinclined to disguise his displeasure at the sight of reporters gathered around his locker—or swinging at you. He's friends with UFC CEO Lorenzo Fertitta and trains with MMA fighters in the off-season. Listed at 6 feet, 217 pounds, Murray looked 10 pounds lighter by the end of 2014. That's what 392 carries—plus





TOM PENNINGTON/GETTY IMAGES

→ MEN OF STEAL

Three teams that could sign Murray

COLTS

Ahmad Bradshaw: has-been. Trent Richardson: never-was. Dan Herron: meh. Indy—\$42 million under the cap—can afford a marquee name.

CARDINALS

You thought they only needed a better third-string QB? Arizona ranked 31st in rushing last year. Situation: desperate.

FALCONS

The Steven Jackson experiment fizzled out. Murray's style is a perfect match for new coordinator Kyle Shanahan's zone-blocking scheme.

57 receptions, not to mention another 48 total touches in the post-season—will do to you.

“He looks slender,” says Dallas’s running backs coach, Gary Brown, “but he plays bigger than what he looks.”

And more tenacious. One thing that’s surprised Murray’s coaches, says Garrett, “is how physically tough he is at the end of runs.” Upon watching Murray as a rookie, it delighted the Cowboys that “at the end of runs he was always going forward,” Garrett goes on. “Always going downhill. You thought he made four [yards], but he made six. You thought he made six, but he made a first down.”

The most extreme expression of Murray’s toughness came in Week 16 this season. One day after he broke a metacarpal in his left (non-dominant) hand during a mid-December win over the Eagles, he underwent surgery: Doctors implanted a plate and eight screws. When his agent, Bill Johnson, raised the possibility that he take some time to recover, Murray cut him off: “My legs work fine. They can cover my hand. I can deal with the pain. I’m going to practice.”

Two days after surgery he practiced. The following Sunday he had 22 carries and a touchdown in a 42–7 rout of the Colts, a win that clinched the NFC East for the Cowboys, snapping a four-year playoff drought. Suspecting that Indy would target his left hand, he tucked the ball into his left arm on his very first carry, “to throw them off a little,” he said afterward with a smile.

He is, for the most part, a smoldering, unsmiling young man whose demeanor made this reporter wonder: What is pissing this guy off? During a brief, unscheduled one-on-one with Murray in a Cowboys Stadium corridor after the team’s wild-card win over the Lions, I noted that he seemed to play with a measure of anger, then asked him (not in so many words), *Is something pissing you off?*

I had some ideas ahead of time. He’d entered 2014 with a reputation, dating to his Oklahoma days, for being slightly brittle. He’d slipped to the third round of the ’11 draft, in which five running backs were taken ahead of him, none of whom has gone on to reach even 1,000 rushing yards in a season. (“Of course, there’s a desire, to make teams wish they didn’t pass him over,” his agent, Johnson, confides. “Whether he articulates it or not.”)

“I don’t worry about where I was drafted, or what people say about me,” said Murray. “Anything that’s said outside this locker room, I

couldn't care less about. My motivation is, I love playing football, I love playing for these guys, I love winning."

But would he agree that he seemed to play angry? With edge? "It's a physical game, and the way you earn respect, the way you get guys ignited, is making big plays, obviously, but also being physical. You can't outrun everyone; you can't make everyone miss. So sometimes you've gotta try to impose your will on the opposition." Ever so briefly, he smiled.

HERE'S WHAT made DeMarco so tough," says his father, Kevin Murray. "His older brothers were always challenging him. They were rough on him, and if he cried, they told him, 'Shut up!'"

DeMarco grew up outside of Las Vegas, the youngest boy of Kevin and Lorraine Murray, who had four sons and three daughters. The couple split up when DeMarco was seven: Lorraine took the girls, and the boys went with Kevin. And while DeMarco's older brothers didn't pamper him, their old man wasn't exactly a port in the storm, either.

An old-school disciplinarian, Kevin Murray insisted that his sons work for their money, starting when they were nine or 10. He recalls, "These boys didn't grow up with a silver spoon." If he felt DeMarco had given less than his best effort at a Pop Warner practice, that day's training continued when they got home. As darkness fell, "I'd have him out in the middle of the street, doing up-downs," says Kevin. And if the kid squirted a few tears during those drills? That was no reason to stop.

DeMarco longed to play running back for his team, the Firebirds, but they already had a sensational back, Quinton Carter (a free safety for the Broncos in 2014), and so Murray was relegated to linebacker.

Was he any good? "He was vicious," says his father. Going into his freshman season at Bishop Gorman, a private school, DeMarco announced that he intended to play running back.

That seemed like a bad idea. He'd never played the position in his life, and he would be under Carter on the depth chart. Nonetheless, Murray was adamant. After two days with the freshman team he was moved up to junior varsity. A week later he was starting for the varsity. Carter transferred to a public school.

David White was hired as Bishop Gorman's coach after Murray's freshman season. Before meeting Murray, he saw pictures of his star tailback with his hair braided in rows, adorned by white beads. "I remember asking someone, 'Who's this with the Rick James look?'"

By his sophomore season Murray had sheared off those rows. He and White became close, but not right away. He was standoffish, "kept me at arm's length," the coach recalls. "Not in a rude way. He was just very private." Gradually coach gained the trust of player.

Gifted as he was, Murray was not demonstrative. "There were times I wanted him to be more excited about what was going on," says White, who notes that, despite starting as a freshman, Murray wasn't named team captain until his senior season.

Instead, Murray let his actions speak for him, like the time White was walking through the gym alongside Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops and Sooners running backs coach Cale Gundy. Neither coach could talk to Murray, who was then an underclassman; they were there to visit another player. But that didn't mean Murray couldn't leave an impression on them.

"Why don't you show 'em a little something?" White suggested to Murray, who obliged by throwing down the type of elaborate,

SUITED UP, READY TO GO

As a former agent (for Matt Hasselbeck, Ricky Williams) and team vice president (Packers), TheMMQB.com's Andrew Brandt has seen both sides of the free-agency frenzy. He provides a look at what will happen behind closed front-office doors when open season kicks off



MARCH 10 is New Year's Day on the NFL calendar, and it's the time for front offices—

general managers, scouts and cap/contract managers—to shine. This is when teams are built into the product that you see in the fall.

In approaching the off-season, every team's top priority is retaining its own key players before the free-agency bell rings. Some franchises have been trying to secure contracts for months with little success, but deadlines spur action; several pending free agents will inevitably be taken off the market in the days leading up to the signing period. Smart agents know that front offices rarely reveal their best offers until the cusp of free agency, and a relatively new "legal tampering" window (three days of legalized pre-free-agency negotiations between agents and outside suitors) gives them a somewhat accurate picture of what other bidders might do.

As teams prepare to acquire from outside, they've already been active with player *deletions*: Across the league hundreds of millions of nonguaranteed dollars have been shed from payrolls through terminated contracts, including players who were once



marquee free-agent additions (see: Reggie Bush, axed by the Lions on Feb. 25). A glance at the waiver wire this week can serve as a cautionary tale for teams tempted to test the free-agent waters.

Throughout this process relationships with agents are critical, and a trusting, cultivated connection can pay dividends both ways. For example, a team might receive from a cooperative agent an unofficial right to match competing offers. Conversely, negative relationships can infect a player's view of a team. Front offices keep dossiers on every agent; they know how much of what he says to discount based on past dealings. They'll even call out bluffing agents to competitors when they feel used, telling another team's executives, "Just in case he's telling you we're chasing that player, we're *not*."

It's important to understand that teams don't look at potential free agents in terms of how good they are in a vacuum. Rather, pro personnel departments evaluate how a free agent might fit their system. That makes NFL

PACKED UP?

Will Green Bay dig deep to retain free agent Randall Cobb? If the Pack get outbid by a deep-pocketed suitor, it won't be the first time, says Brandt.

free agency much more schematic and less seamless than free agency in, say, the NBA or MLB.

The best-managed clubs eventually have agreement from all three sides of their football operation (player personnel, coaching, cap/contract) on any plan to acquire an outside player. Teams get into trouble when, for whatever

reason—the thrill of the chase, the emotion of winning a player over a rival—they stray from the plan. In March 2005, with the Packers, I watched our free-agent guard, Marco Rivera, leverage the bidding of two of the NFL's most emotional decision makers: the Cowboys' Jerry Jones and the Lions' Matt Millen. In just one hour Marco's signing bonus went from \$3 million (our number earmarked to retain him) to \$9 million. Jones gleefully "won" that negotiation.

WHILE THERE'S undoubtedly a thrill in the chase, several teams tend to tread lightly in free agency. That was my experience with the Packers; the Patriots, Chargers, 49ers and Bengals often act similarly. These teams watch and wait out the first few days of free

"The waiver wire this week can be a cautionary tale for teams tempted to test the free-agent waters."

agency, where the "stupid money" is spent, then they look for more reasonable prices. That's how we acquired Charles Woodson in 2006: We noticed that he wasn't being run (chased, in front-office parlance) a few days into free agency, and we capitalized on the lukewarm market.

Bottom line: Everyone is trying to gauge where free agents will end up, looking at other teams' schemes and the financial horsepower of rumored suitors. Cap room is a consideration, but everyone in the business knows that's an accounting mechanism, not a predictor of activity. The Saints were among the most cap-constrained teams in the NFL last year, yet they acquired the most expensive (in terms of guaranteed money) free agent in safety Jairus Byrd. If a team really wants a player, the soft NFL cap—it's more of a yarmulke, I'd say—will not stand in the way.

The free-agency bell is about to ring. Gentlemen, open your wallets.

high-flying dunk that becomes legend. Gundy recalls Murray bouncing the ball off the backboard, catching it mid-flight, then slamming it through. In White's version the dunk features a 360. Either way, Stoops looked at his assistant and posed two questions: "Are you kidding me?" And, "We've offered him, right?"

Oklahoma's primary competition for Murray came from USC, but



"If you don't take him," Switzer told the Cowboys on draft day 2011, "you're as crazy as that time you didn't take Randy Moss."

BLOCK LIKE ME

The debate in Dallas: Who to credit for the Cowboys' rush to success—Murray or the guys like Martin (70), who opened his running lanes.

Trojans coach Pete Carroll looked at Murray and saw . . . *a cornerback*.

The Oklahoma coaches half agreed, such was Murray's supreme athleticism. "He could've been a first-round pick as a corner," says Gundy. But with Adrian Peterson having just bolted for the NFL, they needed Murray in the backfield. And while he never ran out of Peterson's shadow in Norman—

the dislocated right kneecap in 2007 and the ruptured left hamstring in '08 didn't help—Murray did set the school record for career all-purpose yards (6,498) and touchdowns (64).

In that time he earned the admiration of Barry Switzer, who'd coached both the Sooners and the Cowboys in his day and now lived 800 yards from Oklahoma's stadium. As the 2011 draft approached, Switzer made himself a bit of a pest, repeatedly reminding his former boss, Jerry Jones, that the Murray kid would be a nice fit in the Cowboys' offense.

"So I'm watching the draft that year, the third round's coming up, and my phone rings," Switzer recalls. "It's Jerry, in the war room. He says, 'Barry, tell these guys what you told me.'" Switzer obliged thusly: "You all are the luckiest sons of bitches in the world because this kid is a first-round talent falling into your lap, and if you don't take him, you're as crazy as that time you didn't take Randy Moss."

Over the speakerphone came a wave of laughter. Moments later Dallas drafted DeMarco Murray.

FOUR YEARS later, will they *keep* him? The arguments against:

- He's just turned 27, late-middle-age for an NFL running back. With nearly 500 total touches last season, more than any player in the past 16 seasons, the question is valid: How much tread remains on his tires?
- Any old Joe could rush for 1,000 yards behind *that* line, right?
- It's 2015. Running backs have been devalued; that's been well covered. Why pay Murray top dollar—or close to it—when you can bring in another veteran and divvy up carries between him and Todd Gurley, the home-run-hitting back out of Georgia who, due to his left ACL tear in November, could still be available in the April 30 draft when the Cowboys pick at No. 27?

The case for holding? That argument is eloquently made at 7:30 every weekday morning during the season, when Murray meets with Brown, the running backs coach, and they spend an hour eating breakfast while geeking out on . . . defensive fronts.

"You've got to understand where the guys are lined up, where the weakness is going to be," says Brown. "The great ones I've worked with, they understand the game beyond, *I'm gonna run to the five hole*."

Finding the creases in the Cowboys' zone-blocking schemes is part art, part science. Murray is *really* good at it; a savant, the best in the business. Not everyone figures it out. Maybe the 'Boys draft Gurley and it turns out that he, too, has a superb knack for reading fronts, setting up his blocks and finding that daylight.

Then again, maybe he doesn't.

That night on the bus, after hitting the DirecTV bash outside of Phoenix, Jerry and Stephen and Garrett and Romo and Witten and a few others were lounging around, shooting the breeze into the wee hours.

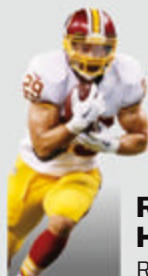
Talking to the elder Jones, Romo motioned to Garrett and Stephen. Those two, he estimated, "have another 25, 30 years" in the business. "You and me," said the quarterback to the owner, "we've got three to five."

The window is open, in other words. But it won't be for long.

All the more reason to keep Murray on the bus. □

WHIZ-BANG FOR THE BUCK

Don't have the dinero for DeMarco? Might we interest you in Helu? **BY CHRIS BURKE**



**ROY
HELU**
RB Redskins

He's been productive for Washington when given opportunities (5.4 yards per carry, 42 receptions last season). Small problem: He hasn't had all that much playing time behind Alfred Morris, who since 2012 has more carries (876) than anyone not named Marshawn Lynch. On a team with a less-entrenched starter, Helu could approach the 1,000 combined yards he racked up as a rookie in '11. He has the best chance to be this crop's Justin Forsett, who sat behind Lynch and the Texans' Arian Foster before breaking out with Baltimore as a late free-agency signee in '14.

PRICIER OPTION

The Patriots' Shane Vereen is coming off career-best numbers in total yards (838), receptions (52) and touchdowns (five). He may set the standard for primarily passing-down backs, but Helu will cost less and might even produce greater overall numbers.



**EDDIE
ROYAL**
WR Chargers

The 5'10", 185-pound slot man quietly hung a combined 15 touchdowns on opponents over the past two seasons—15th in the NFL, and more than Larry Fitzgerald, T.Y. Hilton, Wes Welker and a host of other high-profile names. Royal's 1,409 yards and 109 receptions in that time may not be No. 1 receiver numbers, but he's a solid complementary piece. The majority of his success came on intermediate routes and across the middle of the field; he'll do the dirty work, and at a very reasonable price.

PRICIER OPTION

The Packers' Randall Cobb—but he's a *far* more expensive option. While Royal is capable of sliding outside in an offensive formation or returning punts, Cobb excels in those areas, as well as from the slot and out of the backfield. So why consider Royal? Because after Cobb there's a noticeable drop-off on inside receivers.



THE 2015 NFL free-agent class is chock-full of big names: Murray, Randall Cobb, Ndamukong Suh and Julius Thomas are just a few of the elite talents in line to hit the market. Once the dust settles on those contracts, however, teams will turn their attention to cap-friendlier options. Here are four smaller-money players capable of providing big-time value on the dollar.



**ALAN
BALL**
CB Jaguars

No general manager will head into the signing period thinking, We need to ink Alan Ball. But eventually several will think, We could sure *use* him. Ball turns 30 this month and is coming off a season-ending biceps injury, but he nonetheless can be an effective corner; in fact, he was arguably Jacksonville's best defender in 2013. Teams always go searching for proven veteran depth. Here ya go.

PRICIER OPTION

The Browns' Buster Skrine is four years Ball's junior and coming off his best season (four interceptions, 55 tackles). And there's the dilemma for GMs: Do you toss a few bucks at a steady player like Ball or open the wallet for a high-upside player such as Skrine?



**JIMMY
WILSON**
DB Dolphins

He played cornerback when Miami needed a cornerback, and he played safety when Miami needed a safety. That sounds simple enough, but the transition—especially for a safety dropping down to play nickel corner—is far easier said than done. (Wilson's stats reflect that trickiness: He graded out as ProFootballFocus's 34th-best safety and its 94th-best corner.) Wilson will sell himself on his value as a Swiss Army knife in the secondary. That's a mighty tool in this pass-heavy NFL.

PRICIER OPTION

Antrel Rolle is more or less locked in as a starting safety nowadays, but he did begin as a corner in Arizona, and the Giants tinkered with him as a nickel corner as well. Because he's 32, he may pass as a relative bargain, but his durability alone (one missed game over the past nine seasons) will get teams on the phone.



PRO BASKETBALL

DOING THEIR FAIR SHARE

They have no one resembling a superstar, but the Hawks are still running away with the East, smashing records and reenergizing a wary fan base.

That's because the entire roster has embraced a system of rapid-fire ball movement—especially the point guard

BY LEE JENKINS

Photographs by
Greg Nelson
For Sports Illustrated

LIVING IN THE PASS

In just his second season running Atlanta's Spurs-like offense, Teague has been a maestro, reconnecting to the unselfish way he learned to play as a kid.



→ **WHEN THE** basketball coaches at Boston University summoned players to Case Gymnasium for individual workouts in the fall of 1982, Rick Pitino always seemed to pick Happy. Pitino was a 30-year-old coach, and Happy was a sophomore point guard who had transferred from Missouri expecting to blow past mid-major competition. If teammates tried screening for Happy, he waved them away, certain he didn't need the help. "I felt I'd win any one-on-one situation," he says. "I just wanted to go score." But a point guard in Pitino's system had to make everybody else happy as well. "You're strong and you're fast," the coach acknowledged, "but what if they put a bigger defender on you, or trap you, or run a triangle on you?" Pitino demonstrated how a savvy ballhandler can leverage the attention he commands. "He showed me how to use picks, take angles, involve all five guys," remembers Happy, who dished out 662 assists in three seasons at Boston, then a school record, and guided the Terriers to the NCAA tournament for the first time in 24 years.

Outside of BU, Happy is known as Shawn Teague, point guard patriarch. After two fruitless NBA tryouts, Shawn and his wife, Carol, settled in Indianapolis and raised three boys, to whom he imparted Pitino's lessons. Jeff, the middle son, played at a YMCA where teams had to pass four times before they shot. He joined an adult league at The SportZone where he had to maneuver around men 20 years older. On his backyard hoop he ran sets in the dark so he could sense spots on the floor without looking at them. At Pike High he memorized where every starter was positioned on every play, and he rejoiced when they all finished with 10 to 12 points. He once grew so excited by a behind-the-back assist to shooting guard Lou Hogan that he broke into a dance at half-court. "Jeff made you feel like you were as good as he was," Hogan recalls.

But Indianapolis was teeming with talent in the mid-2000s—from Eric Gordon to Mike Conley, Greg Oden to Josh McRoberts—and Jeff couldn't even get Pitino, let alone other top Division I coaches, to notice him. "I felt like I had to change," he says, "so people would pay attention." It was a sad statement about amateur basketball, but an honest one. In the AAU season between his junior and senior years, Jeff consciously morphed into an Iversonian gunner, and recruiters took the bait. He landed a scholarship from Wake Forest on the day he rushed coast-to-coast in four

seconds for a game-winning layup against the vaunted Illinois Wolves.

Jeff was suddenly a scoring guard, and after he averaged 18.8 points with a paltry 3.5 assists as a sophomore at Wake, the Hawks drafted him 19th in 2009 and plugged him into a stilted isolation offense. His primary responsibilities involved feeding forward Josh Smith and occasionally throwing up a floater at the end of the shot clock. "That style made me lazy," Teague says. "I didn't cut. I didn't slash. I didn't move without the ball." When critics dismiss the NBA as glorified one-on-one, they are likely referencing those Atlanta teams.

Shortly after sharpshooter Kyle Korver joined the Hawks 2½ years ago, he told Teague how he liked to receive passes when racing around pin-down screens. "He'd never been taught stuff like that," Korver recalls. "It wasn't his fault. It was how he'd been programmed." Rather, it was how he'd been reprogrammed. When Shawn watched the Hawks, he cringed, wondering where the kid from The SportZone had gone. "He hated how we played," Teague says of his father. "He wasn't even a Hawks fan. He was a Spurs fan." San Antonio's incessant movement took Shawn back to Pitino, as did the Spurs' coaching staff, which included former BU teammate Brett Brown, one of Gregg Popovich's top assistants. Another was Mike Budenholzer. In May '13, Atlanta hired Budenholzer to replace coach Larry Drew, just as Teague entered restricted free agency. He was a middling 6' 2", 180-pound speed merchant, prepared to sign with the Bucks, where Drew waited with more isos. But Budenholzer had scouted Teague coming out of Wake, had met him through Brown and had heard about Happy. "Jeff knew good basketball," Budenholzer says. He helped persuade a wary front office to match a four-year, \$32 million offer sheet, and the quest to untangle Teague's DNA began.

Atlanta has accomplished more this season than in any of the past 46. The Hawks have put together the best record in the Eastern Conference. They've produced a club-record four All-Stars. They've had a 19-game winning streak. They've compensated for a lack of size and depth with balanced box scores and sledgehammer screens. They've proved that elegant offense exists outside the Alamo, and that Americans can share the ball as selflessly as Europeans. They've charmed a jaded city, overcome a mortifying scandal and done it all while the franchise is for sale and the general manager is on leave. In light of everything, maybe it's insignificant that they've also allowed an Indiana point guard to reclaim his basketball soul. But the story of Jeff Teague is the story of the Hawks and the modern NBA, discovering a better way to play, which was evident all along.



FIRST AMONG EQUALS

Leading rebounder Millsap (4) also sets the pace in scoring (17.0 points per game), though all five starters average double digits.

HAWKS

5

Hawks named NBA Player of the Month in January, when they became the first starting quintet ever to share the award.

17-0

Atlanta's record in January, the best mark for a month in NBA history.

25.6

Assists per game for the Hawks, second in the league only to the Warriors' 27.1.

TEAGUE SITS at the kitchen table in his 31st-floor Buckhead apartment, admiring the view. It is a clear, cold afternoon, and the granite colossus that is Stone Mountain rises beyond his floor-to-ceiling windows. But the 26-year-old is drawn to a different natural phenomenon. Teague is watching a clip of the Atlanta offense in a January game at Toronto. In the possession that piques his interest, the Hawks make six passes to five players. The ball switches sides twice yet never hits the ground. Power forward Paul Millsap turns down a five-footer, and Teague turns down an open three so Korver can line up a *more* open three. "That's what we do," Teague says. "That's who we are. Everybody touches the ball, nobody dances with it, and even if you've got a layup, you give it to Kyle Korver."

Teague is the unlikely conductor of this hardwood orchestra. After Budenholzer was hired, he called his new point guard and said, "We're going to do something totally different than what you're used to." Teague was reluctant. The Hawks weren't a great team—since moving from St. Louis in 1968, they've reached the conference finals only twice—but they weren't terrible, either. In Teague's four seasons before Budenholzer's arrival, the Hawks averaged 45 victories and won two playoff series. They made him a starter and paid him well. Then he reported to training camp in September 2013



OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Carroll found a cutting Horford—with a hint from Korver—showing yet again how Atlanta anticipates seams in the defense.

in front of him. “What are we doing?” he asked. “If I have some space, I can get to the basket!” “Trust me,” Budenholzer shot back. “I’ve seen this work for Tony Parker a million times.” Point guards and their coaches spar often, but from early February to early March, the Hawks dropped 14 of 15 games and Teague lost faith. “I went back to my old habits,” he

and couldn’t find his chair. “You’re over there now,” said reserve big man Gustavo Ayon, motioning to the spot between center Al Horford and forward Mike Scott. Budenholzer wanted players sitting next to one teammate they could influence and another who could influence them. *This is crazy*, Teague thought. Budenholzer also wanted the Hawks eating dinner together after road games. “Breaking bread,” he called it. *Elton Brand has been in the league 15 years*, Teague said to himself. *He’ll be out with some business partner.*

Budenholzer installed his version of the read-and-react offense, with hints of Popovich and Mike D’Antoni. “We’ve basically got two plays—strong and weak,” Teague explains. “That gets us into positions, but from there, we all have to make split-second decisions on what we do out of it: maybe a high pick-and-roll, or a dribble handoff, or Kyle coming around a screen. We look at the defense and just do what feels right. Other teams will call out, ‘Thumb four!’ and we know exactly what they’re going to do. No one knows what we’re going to do because we don’t even know ourselves. It’s like controlled pickup.”

They must adhere to a few rules. No one is allowed to hold the ball for more than two seconds, and when somebody drives, others have to account for a few key spots: the low block, the top of the circle and the 45-degree marks on the wings. “We pass to those places blind,” Teague says.

The system demands constant cutting and screening, which can cause claustrophobia. Early last season, whenever Teague tried to clear out and drive on a slower guard, a teammate seemed to flash

says. “Give me iso and get out of the way.” In one-on-one film sessions, Budenholzer kept telling Teague, “You’re still not cutting hard enough.”

Kenny Atkinson, a prized Atlanta assistant under both Drew and Budenholzer, saw a player stuck between eras and identities, asking existential questions: *Am I a scorer? Am I a passer? Who am I?* Atkinson provided the best and straightest answer: “You can be a complete point guard in this system. You can do it all.” Drive and kick, pick-and-roll, pocket passes and corner threes—the domain of the NBA’s most dynamic floor generals, from Chris Paul to Damian Lillard, Kyrie Irving to, yes, Tony Parker. Teague started to recognize, as his father did a generation before, that all the screeners and cutters were not trying to muck up his spacing. They were presenting him with options.

The Hawks lost again in the first round of the playoffs, but they pushed Indiana to seven games, and 6’ 9” Paul George was the only Pacer who could corral Teague. Then San Antonio won the championship, and everybody from Golden State to Toronto said they wanted to operate more like the Spurs. Atlanta was already on its way. “I guess you don’t have to score 28 points anymore,” Teague reasoned, “for people to notice.”

ONE PRESEASON projection pegged Atlanta for 40.5 wins, the same number as the Knicks. The starters could shoot and pass, like San Antonio’s, but they weren’t Hall of Famers and they weren’t European. The Spurs popularized the notion that international players, unspoiled by AAU, are best equipped to thrive in egalitarian systems; the Hawks’ starting five represent America’s heartland: Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Louisiana and Alabama.

The predictions looked accurate on Nov. 18, when Atlanta lost to the Lakers and fell to 5–5, prompting an interminable film session at Philips Arena. “We were still fighting it,” Brand says. “We saw that we weren’t doing the little things—the extra pass, the extra effort, the box-out.” Those became the qualities that define the Hawks. When Korver sinks a three off a Brand screen, the first words you hear from the bench are, “Yeah, EB! We see you, EB! Clean ’em up, EB!” Korver gets congratulated later.

"Everyone is part of the shot," Korver says. "Everyone matters, and if you feel like you matter, you take ownership." No Atlanta starter averages more than 17 points or fewer than 11. All five were named Player of the Month in January. They split the award like they share the ball.

The Hawks compare themselves to an expensive watch ("We're all a gear," says guard Kent Bazemore) and a deep-dish pizza ("We're all a piece," says Teague). When Teague took a charge this season, he hollered at Brand, "My first one ever!" And when he returned from a gimpy hamstring, he asked Budenholzer if he could come off the bench, "so I don't mess us up." A WWE devotee, Teague likens himself to Rey Mysterio, Korver to Shawn Michaels, Horford to Hulk Hogan, Millsap to The Undertaker. The team plays UNO or Spades together on the plane and adheres to breaking bread on the road, despite the limited menu options. "Coach takes us to these fancy Italian restaurants, with foie gras and escargot," Brand laments. "We're like, Hey, anybody got any french fries with ketchup over here?"

Contrary to his foodie tendencies—undoubtedly acquired over 19 years spent alongside Popovich—Budenholzer still rides MARTA to the arena. He went to a Drake concert with small forward DeMarre Carroll. He calls or texts players after tough losses: "Thinking about you, man. Don't worry about the last shot. We got another one tomorrow." The Hawks refer to him as Bud, which is appropriate. "I've never had a coach care about me like this," says Teague, who has eaten dinner with Budenholzer's family and plays one-on-one with his sons before games.

The 45-year-old Bud is a near lock for Coach of the Year, but as acting GM, he also warrants consideration for Executive of the Year. Two summers ago he lobbied for Teague and Millsap, recruited Carroll and Korver. They weren't glittery free agents, but they were quick thinkers, able to handle the freedom he was about to give them. "I wanted to play for the Spurs for 10 years," Korver says. "They kind of came to me." Bud Ball is good for everybody, but no one has blossomed as much as Teague, who at week's end was averaging a career-high 16.7 points and 7.3 assists. "A lot of guys in this league, after three or four years, they're kind of done: *This is who I am. This is what I'm going to be,*" Korver says. "Jeff mentally remade himself. Everything we do starts with him—coming off the screen, sucking in two defenders, reading the pick-and-roll, reading the weakside coverage and making the right decision. He dictates it."

Whether he would have taken the leap elsewhere, with a different coach and a different system, is disorienting to consider. "What we do here is so fun, so free-flowing, it would be hard going back to iso ball again," Teague says. Even his dad is cheering again. On Feb. 6, the Hawks beat the West-leading Warriors 124–116 in a track meet that featured 59 assists and 60 attempted threes. Afterward, Atlanta coaches unwound in the locker room. "That," Atkinson gushed, "was a game from the future."

To hear the Hawks, they have happened upon basketball utopia, a hoop paradise set against a stormy backdrop.

STEVE KOONIN rushes up the stairs of Philips Arena in a white dress shirt and a pin-striped suit. He wants you to get a clear view of the new projection system that transforms the court into a 3-D movie screen during pregame introductions, and then he wants you to see the rollicking crowd filling the bar at Chops Clubside, and he also wants you to know this is the eighth straight sellout, and TV ratings are up almost 100%, and a new oyster bar may be on the way and, oh, did



BUD BALL

In the scheme created by Budenholzer (right), the deadeye Korver (above) gives as well as receives, while Horford (far right), the longest-tenured Hawk, applies pressure up front.



you notice Martin Luther King III just rolled in?

The Hawks made Koonin their CEO last April, and five months later the franchise imploded. First, controlling owner Bruce Levenson announced he was selling the club, partly because of the revelation that he had sent an email two years earlier urging the organization to target suburban whites, whom he believed were alienated from games by an abundance of African-American fans. Then, GM Danny Ferry took a leave of absence after saying on a conference call that free agent Luol Deng "has a little African in him. Not in a bad way, but he's like a guy who would have a nice store out front but sell you counterfeit stuff out of the back." Koonin was left to repair the damage, though in many ways the work had already begun.

Levenson's email wasn't just offensive, it was misguided. Koonin had market research indicat-

HAWKS

**"That's what we do,"
Teague says.
"Everybody touches the
ball, nobody dances
with it, and even if
you've got a layup,
you give it to Kyle
Korver."**



ing the Hawks should actually take the opposite approach from what their owner espoused. "We are aggressively targeting millennials and African-American consumers," he says. "Those are the people who show the highest predisposition to our product. Why would we chase the people who don't?" In January the Hawks hosted *Swipe Right Night*, inspired by the dating app Tinder. In February they screened the movie *Selma* for fans. The white-haired CEO has emboldened his social media staff—"It's O.K. America. You still have these

Hawks," social media manager Jaryd Wilson tweeted after the Super Bowl, earning 5,300 retweets—and diversified his marketing force. One consultant is Rev. Toussaint K. Hill Jr. of the West Hunter Street Baptist Church. No word on the reverend's opinion of Tinder.

Budenholzer and Koonin form an odd couple. One came from the Spurs, understated and tight-lipped. The other came from the entertainment industry and could headline a show himself. Koonin sells the Hawks as few others ever have. His family goes back 100 years in Atlanta, and he was a season-ticket holder for 30. In 1988 he attended the legendary Atlantic Records 40th-anniversary concert at Madison Square Garden but left early because the Hawks were hosting a playoff game against the Celtics the next day. He lowers his voice reverentially when he evokes Dominique Wilkins.

Before Koonin rose up the ranks at Turner Entertainment Networks, he steered marketing at Coca-Cola, signing Kobe Bryant out of high school for \$30,000. Koonin understood the significance of stars, finding them and promoting them. But these Hawks have shifted his perspective. "I get emails from parents who tell me, 'I drove an hour and a half to the game because I want my daughter to see what a team looks like,'" Koonin says. "They appreciate that there's not one guy."

Barring collapse, the Hawks will capture the No. 1 seed in the East, but Koonin is an Atlantan, so he knows better than to daydream about championships. "Can you spray champagne if you win the Southeast Division?" he asks, like a true Braves fan. Several Hawks are on bargain contracts, including Millsap and Carroll, who will be unrestricted free agents this summer. According to Koonin, the plan is to maintain the core, but the club is still for sale and Ferry remains in limbo. A different regime could have other ideas. "These guys have proved," Koonin says, "that a new owner would be foolhardy to mess with the magic they've built."

When the Clippers found themselves in a similar crisis last spring, after the racist rant by then owner Donald Sterling, the team was rattled. Like the Clippers, the Hawks held meetings and aired concerns, but after that they took refuge in basketball. They didn't need an owner or a GM. The back picks and hockey assists provided order amid chaos. The game was so pure compared with the politics surrounding it.

Even during last month's All-Star break, when the Hawks invaded New York, they seemed to miss down-home hoops. One night after they returned to Atlanta, Budenholzer flew to Duke for the North Carolina game, and the next, Teague drove

to Georgia State in downtown Atlanta because R.J. Hunter was playing.

Hunter is a 6' 6" junior shooting guard who starred at Pike High alongside Teague's younger brother, Marquis, currently with the Oklahoma City Blue of the D-League. Marquis was a first-round pick, and Hunter probably will be as well. His smooth three-point stroke recalls Korver's at Creighton. Sitting in the fifth row behind the Panthers' bench, wearing a black ski cap, Teague blends into the modest gym. He tracks Hunter, who is feverishly trying to wriggle free, setting a screen, making a cut, racing around another screen, making another cut. He never stops moving. When he finally gets the ball and drills the three, he's earned it. The band erupts. "He's an Indiana kid," Teague says. "He knows how to play." □

A HIDDEN EPID



In *The Hunting Ground*, their searing new documentary about rape on American college campuses, writer/director Kirby Dick and producer Amy Ziering do something that journalists are not supposed to: They bury the lead. Dick and Ziering conducted an on-camera interview with the victim of one of the most high-profile alleged sexual assaults of recent years, who speaks publicly for the first time, but they don't introduce her until relatively late in the movie. The filmmakers have good reason for doing so.

For the first two thirds of the documentary, Dick and Ziering do the work of establishing that their subject is nothing short of an epidemic, one that, until recently, has been largely hidden. Joyful home videos, set to "Pomp and Circumstance," depicting teenagers learning of their college acceptances—"I got in!" they shout—quickly transition to a steady stream of haunted young faces with harrowing stories to tell. These young women (and some men) are not just traumatized by their assaults but also by the aftermaths, in which they sought help and support from powerful institutions and generally were denied both.

Colleges and universities, the filmmakers contend, don't want to acknowledge the problem—it's terrible p.r.—and, often, they do not. According to the film, which cites the 2014 U.S. Senate Survey, 40% of colleges reported zero sexual assaults in '12. We learn that between '01 and '13, the University of North Carolina received 136 reports of assaults and expelled none of the accused. Between 1998 and 2013, the University of Virginia received 205 reports and also expelled nobody, although it did kick out 183 students for cheating and other honor board violations.

College athletes are not the film's central focus, but it tells us that while less than 4% of college men are student-athletes, that group is responsible for more than 19% of reported assaults. The latest high-profile athlete to force the topic into headlines is Duke basketball player Rasheed Sulaimon, who was dismissed from the team in January; on Monday, *The (Duke) Chronicle* reported that the ban was spurred by multiple accusations of sexual assault last year against him. The film, which does not cover the Sulaimon case, suggests that because athletic departments wield so much power, athletes are very likely to evade punishment. "When they walk across campus, it's not like any other student walking across campus," says Don McPherson, the former Syracuse quarterback and a member of the College Football Hall of Fame, who is interviewed in the film. "There's a multibillion-dollar industry that wraps around these young men."

At Notre Dame, for instance—where Lizzy Seeberg, a freshman at neighboring Saint Mary's College, reported in 2010 that she was assaulted by a football player—campus police were forbidden from contacting athletes at any athletic facility and from asking any athletic employee for help in contacting them. Seeberg committed suicide 10 days after the incident, after having received a threatening text from a friend of the player telling her that "messing with notre dame football is a bad idea." At that time

THE CASES OF
SEVERAL HIGH-
PROFILE ATHLETES
ARE REMINDERS
THAT SEXUAL
ASSAULT IS A
TOO-FREQUENT
PROBLEM ON
COLLEGE CAMPUSES.
A NEW FILM SHINES
LIGHT ON THE
SCOURGE AND ON
THOSE WHO SUFFER
IN THE DARK

BY BEN REITER



COURTESY OF RADIIUS

EMIC



police had yet to interview her alleged assailant. Says Pat Cottrell, a longtime member of the Notre Dame police force who retired before the Seeborg incident, “My bosses were saying that they had empathy for victims of crimes, but it was like I told them, that ‘Talk is cheap, and that’s all it is with you guys is talk. You don’t really support victims of crimes.’”

It is not until 72 minutes into *The Hunting Ground* that Dick and Ziering show their interview with the film’s most prominent subject—a necessary choice, for if it had come earlier, it might have overwhelmed their broader narrative. Her name is Erica Kinsman, and she was a premed student with a six-class course load when, in December 2012, her life was changed forever. Kinsman tells of a night that she began at a bar near campus and ended watching bruises appear on her body as she lay in a hospital bed, the result of an assault during which, she says, a fellow student pushed her head into a bathroom floor as he raped her. It wasn’t until the next semester that she learned the identity of that student, when his name was called in a class they shared: Jameis Winston, the future quarterback for the Florida State football team.

Over the next months, the film alleges, the Tallahassee authorities dawdled in investigating Kinsman’s claims, and Winston stayed on the field to



CENTERS OF THE STORM

While Winston (left) went unpunished, Sulaimon (top) and Jones (above) were dismissed by their teams after being accused.

lead the Seminoles to a national championship and to win the Heisman Trophy. Kinsman was smeared as a fabulist and an opportunist intent on bringing down a famous athlete; fans threatened to burn down her sorority house. “As soon as I saw this story break, I thought how terribly, terribly unfair it is . . . to this young man,” Skip Bayless said on ESPN. The rape kit wasn’t tested until almost a year after the assault. While Winston’s DNA matched the sample, state attorney and FSU alumnus Willie Meggs declined to press charges, and Winston was later cleared of violating the school’s code of conduct.

“I think I did not have sufficient evidence to prove that he sexually assaulted her against her will,” Meggs says in the film. “I think things that happened there that night were not good.” As Winston is drafted into the NFL next month, likely No. 1 overall, any-

one who has watched *The Hunting Ground* will be hard-pressed not to think of Erica Kinsman, who has since left FSU. “I know it was the right thing to do to come forward,” she says. “But investigator [Scott] Angulo was

right whenever he said that I would be driven out of Tallahassee.”

Another reason why Dick and Ziering likely delayed Kinsman’s appearance in *The Hunting Ground* is that their film is not so much a work of impartial journalism but one of advocacy—Kinsman’s emotional interview is treated more as a narrative device than as breaking news. The film has a strong and laudable mission, but that means that certain elements of a terribly complicated problem are somewhat glossed over. Perhaps the most shocking of the many outrageous, meticulously footnoted facts the filmmakers present is that 16% to 20% of undergraduate women are sexually assaulted in college, though the figure is in dispute; other studies suggest that the annual incidence rate is well under 1%. The film also rejects the idea that false accusations represent a real issue, as between 92% and 98% of reports are estimated to be credible. But Dick and Ziering offer no solutions for how campus authorities should balance the need for swift and severe disciplinary responses with everyone’s right to due process.

Even so, *The Hunting Ground* succeeds in bringing into the light crimes that were once conducted and largely suffered in the dark, and empowers its survivors, including Erica Kinsman. Thanks to activists like Annie Clark and Andrea Pino—former UNC students who suffered on-campus assaults and who are central subjects of the film—more than 90 universities are currently under federal investigation for violating Title IX, the gender equity law that guarantees all students the right to an equal education, and the Obama Administration has frequently addressed the issue. The problem isn’t going away; in addition to the Sulaimon news, last week Louisville dismissed basketball guard Chris Jones from the team, just before he pled not guilty to charges of rape and sodomy. But it is no longer hidden. □

Sports Illustrated OVERTIME

FOR MORE SI EVENTS AND PROMOTIONS, FOLLOW @SI_OVERTIME



★★★ SI SWIMSUIT LAUNCH WEEK FROM BROADWAY TO BROADWAY



COVER MODEL **HANNAH DAVIS** SIGNED AUTOGRAPHS FOR DEDICATED FANS WHO PACKED THE TENT IN NYC

★★★



CROWDS FILLED **SWIMCITY** IN NEW YORK'S HERALD SQUARE TO MEET MODELS AND EXPERIENCE THE 2015 SHOOT LOCATIONS

★★★



THE **OLD SPICE** CABIN OFFERED THOUSANDS OF ENTHUSIASTIC GUESTS PRODUCT SAMPLES, GAMES AND FUN PHOTO OPS



SPORTS ILLUSTRATED SWIMSUIT turned up the heat this February, celebrating its launch like never before with the first-ever Swimsuit Fan Festival. Two cities, four days and more than 50,000 fans. Events kicked off in New York City where guests visited SwimCity in Herald Square to meet the models, get photos and autographs, see live interviews, buy Swimsuit merchandise and check out partner activations. On the evening of Feb. 10, models and VIPs toasted the launch at Marquee NYC.

NEW YORK



TOP ROW: ERIN HEATHERTON, CAROLINE WOZNIAKCI, DEREK JETER, HANNAH DAVIS, HANNAH FERGUSON, CONN DAVIS **MIDDLE ROW:** BRENDAN RIPP, EMILY RATAJKOWSKI, M.J. DAY, ROSE BERTRAM, ASHLEY SMITH, SARA SAMPAIO **BOTTOM ROW:** GENEVIEVE MORTON, SOLVEIG, EMILY DIDONATO, KELLY ROHRBACH, HAILEY CLAUSON, CHANEL IMAN, JESSICA GOMES



NEXT, SI SWIM TOOK OVER MUSIC CITY with a custom SwimVille tent on Nashville's Lower Broadway. Visitors enjoyed live music from 12 Nashville-based artists spanning multiple genres, including country hitmakers **Chris Young** and **Holly Williams**. On Feb.11, Nashville's own **Kings of Leon** performed a concert at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center, followed by a VIP after-party at Pinewood Social. The next day, chefs from 14 local restaurants showcased their signature dishes at ACME Feed & Seed. Blues legend **Keb' Mo'** as well as **Striking Matches** and **The Whigs** added flavor and music.

NASHVILLE



TOP ROW: GIGI HADID, KATE BOCK, LILY ALDRIDGE, SAMANTHA HOOPES, NINA AGDAL **MIDDLE ROW:** HOLLY WILLIAMS, DEANA IVEY, NIKKI LANE, KEB' MO', CHRIS YOUNG **BOTTOM ROW:** BUTCH SPYRIDON, ARIEL MEREDITH, HAKEEM NICKS, IRINA SHAYK, CHRISSY TEIGEN, JOHN LEGEND

PHOTOS BY: MICHAEL KELLY, SAMANTHA YONOFKY, YVE ASSAD AND TERRY WYATT/GETTY IMAGES



NASHVILLE LINED UP IN ANTICIPATION OF THE SI SWIMSUIT MODELS AND TWO DAYS OF LOCAL LIVE MUSIC

★★★



SARA SAMPAIO AND EMILY RATAJKOWSKI ARRIVED AT THE RED CARPET. LEXUS GOT THEM THERE IN STYLE

★★★



EDITOR **DARCIE BAUM** AND PHOTOGRAPHER **JAMES MACARI** SHARED SWIMSUIT STORIES AND WHY HE LOVES HIS MAUI JIMS

★★★



FANS WERE CHALLENGED TO MATCH FEATS OF STRENGTH BY SI SWIMSUIT MODELS, THANKS TO **SMITH & FORGE HARD CIDER**

★★★



KINGS OF LEON ROCKED THE STAGE AT THE SCHERMERHORN SYMPHONY CENTER, LIVE-STREAMED ON **SI.COM**

A Giant Shadow

Aaron Levi wanted to know who he was, where he came from, where he belonged. His curiosity was born of a feeling that he was different. He was a biracial child adopted by a white couple when he was six months old. Taller than his schoolmates at almost every age, he was 6' 5" by the time he left high school. He was also gay—and, he said, desperately trying to hide it.

At South Eugene (Ore.) High in the early 1980s he passed himself off as a New Waver, shaping his hair into a flattop, listening to British reggae. He loved to draw, and he began to identify as an artist. Because of his height and color, he said people assumed that he played basketball. But he had little interest in sports.

Classmates often asked him, "What are you?" Some figured he was Greek, Italian or Middle Eastern. When he grew older and moved to Northern California to attend art school, a few people spoke to him in Spanish, assuming he was Latino. He noticed how African-Americans gave him a brotherly nod.

He imagined his biological parents as romantic partners happy to have given him flesh and blood. He learned later, through his own experience, the pain of the adoption process, both for himself and for his birth mother. "When you are adopted," he said, "rejection is woven into your DNA."

Still, he knew he was lucky. He said he had a happy childhood in Oregon with loving adoptive parents, though they divorced when he was still in grade school. Don and Harriet Levi adopted four children of color during the Sixties, including a daughter they named Naema in honor of a John Coltrane ballad. They told Aaron what they knew about his biological parents: that his mother was white and his father black and tall, at least 6' 10". That's all that the Santa Clara County (Calif.) Social Services Agency had told them.

For Aaron the mystery began there. What in his genes might explain his love of all things British (Diana Rigg and *The Avengers*, Angela Lansbury, the magical sound of a British accent)? When his younger brother had a football mural painted on his bedroom wall, nine-year-

*Boasting about
his sexual
encounters,
Wilt Chamberlain
said there would
never be any
"little Wilties."
That may not
have been true,
as adoptee
Aaron Levi found
in his quest to
locate his
biological parents*

By
Gary M. Pomerantz

Photographs by
Deanne Fitzmaurice
For Sports Illustrated

Robert Huntzinger
For Sports Illustrated (Wilt)

FATHER AND SON?
*Levi (right) said he wants
no money from the family of
Chamberlain (here in March 1965,
not long after Levi was born).*



old Aaron asked for Mary Poppins on his, and there she was, flying away with her umbrella. As a teenager Aaron bought the cast album of the musical *Annie* and heard “Maybe,” a wistful song in which young orphans wonder who their biological parents are and where they might be. It reflected his own yearnings: “*Betcha they’re good/Why shouldn’t they be?/Their one mistake/Was giving up me!*”

In 2003, nearing 40, Levi finally began to search for answers to his questions. When he found and spoke with his biological mother, he heard in her accent that she was British. But that wasn’t the most surprising revelation. Levi was told that his biological father was the most transformative player in pro basketball history and one of the most transcendent athletes of the 20th century.

Out of the blue I received an email from Levi in February 2014. The subject line read, “In regards to Wilt Chamberlain.”

I’ve often received emails about Chamberlain in the decade since the publication of my book *WILT, 1962*, a narrative about the night he scored 100 points against the Knicks in Hershey, Pa. Chamberlain, the Philadelphia Warriors’ 7’ 1” center, averaged a record 50.4 points per game in the 1961–62 season, during which NBA owners limited the number of African-American players to just a few per team.

That season the 25-year-old Chamberlain moved in his own orbit. He drove a white Cadillac convertible, lived in a chic apartment on Manhattan’s Central Park West and commuted to home games in Philadelphia. He co-owned a nightclub in Harlem, Big Wilt’s Smalls Paradise, where he socialized with entertainers such as Cannonball Adderley, James Brown, Redd Foxx and Etta James. His was a lush life with a jazz sound track; he moved through his club as if he owned all of New York City. When a beautiful woman caught his eye he sent an emissary to quietly let her know of his interest. During a game in Philadelphia that season he whispered to a Warriors official at the scorer’s table, “The blonde sitting underneath the basket. Get her number for me.”

In his email Levi, a printmaker and digital artist in San Francisco, said he’d just read my book and was seeking my advice—and help. Ten years earlier, he wrote, “I discovered that Wilt is my biological father.”

I was skeptical. Legion are those who have reached for fame and fortune by claiming to be the child of a prominent figure. But Levi came to me with more than a story. He had documentation. He showed

AARON LEVI



“It’s been a burden on me to feel that I am her secret,” Levi said of his biological mother, “and I am Wilt’s secret, and I am the Chamberlain family’s secret.”



the “non-identifying” papers from his 1965 adoption, which did not name his biological parents but described them in compelling detail. He sent high school photos of himself, placing them alongside the famous photo of Chamberlain after his 100-point game. The resemblance of the 25-year-old Wilt to the 16-year-old Aaron was striking: the same almond-shaped eyes, arching eyebrows, facial bone structure, even smiles.

In his 1991 memoir, *A View from Above*, Chamberlain famously boasted of having slept with 20,000 women. The claim reduced him to such a caricature the last eight years of his life that even he made light of the number. A former lover quoted him as saying, “What’s a zero among friends?”

But until the day he died, at 63, from a heart attack at his Bel-Air mansion in October 1999, Chamberlain made it clear there would be no “little Wilties.” He was right in a way. Levi is 6’ 5” and weighs 250 pounds.

Chamberlain had what might be called a Goliath complex, a need to prove his greatness in all ways. During my book research, his friends and former teammates told me of how Wilt cheated at cards, boasted that he had driven nonstop from New York City to Los Angeles in 36 hours (“There’s no speed limit in Kansas,” he crowed) and claimed he had killed a mountain lion with his hands.

He played 14 NBA seasons, won two championships, led the league in rebounding 11 times and was the top scorer seven times. He finished with more than 31,000 points, having helped to transform the obscure NBA into a phenomenon. But only two numbers dominated his obituaries: 100, for the legendary night that he produced the only single-triple in NBA history, and 20,000, for the supposed sexual conquests that, he wrote in 1991, “equals out to having sex with 1.2 women a day, every day since I was fifteen years old.”

His editor, Peter Gethers, told me years ago that Chamberlain had said,



TALL ORDER

To discover the identities of his birth parents, Levi (at home in San Francisco) used adoption records and the assistance of Internet search angels.

psychiatrist, said his essential questions are, “Who does he belong to? Where are you in the world? Who are you? Who claims you as theirs?”

His adoptive father, Don, a rabbi’s son and a retired University of Oregon philosophy professor, said, “Aaron has been, I won’t say obsessed, but he’s been preoccupied for some time about this.”

“It’s been a burden on me to feel that I am her secret,” Aaron said of his biological mother, “and I am Wilt’s secret, and I am the Chamberlain family’s secret. That’s been hard for me. . . . I already know what’s going to happen if I don’t do anything. I’m going to have an unfinished journey.”

Levi’s living room, on the second floor of a Victorian house, is light and airy, decorated in earth tones. There are books (some about Chamberlain), a long row of DVDs from *The Avengers* television series, a flat-screen TV and a soft tan couch. French doors open to his bedroom. In a second bedroom a manual four-color printing press is set up.

For the past decade Levi has lived in the city where his story began. He doesn’t look much like Chamberlain now. He is soft around the middle and has a receding hairline. Nor is his movement athletic; he’s more of a lumberer. He’s an engaging conversationalist. His emotional pain seems close to the surface.

Bob Spector, a boyhood friend from Oregon who lives only a few blocks away, shares dinner and a TV movie with Levi once a week and counts him as his closest friend. Nevertheless, Spector said, “Aaron spends a lot of time alone.” Levi is deeply introspective, and when he spoke of his long search for his biological parents, his voice turned somber. “It all comes back to the sadness that Wilt’s not here,” he said. If Chamberlain were alive today, he would be 78. “I guess I’m still reaching out,” Levi said, “because the ultimate person for me to reach out to is just not there.”

Levi was born on Jan. 27, 1965. Nine months earlier, in the spring of 1964, Chamberlain led the San Francisco Warriors past the St. Louis Hawks in the Western Conference finals, only to lose to Bill Russell and the Boston Celtics in the NBA Finals. After the Warriors’ Game 7 victory over the Hawks, Chamberlain, his teammate Tom

“You have to understand what it was like in those days. That’s what an athlete did.” Chamberlain, who never married, wrote that once, when he attended a birthday party in San Francisco with 15 women, “I got all but one before the rising of the sun.”

His boast was a public relations disaster. He was on a book tour when Magic Johnson announced he was HIV positive. Soon Chamberlain’s endorsements vanished. On *Saturday Night Live* in 1991 rapper MC Hammer, portraying Wilt in a sketch, produced a woman’s photo and said, “Tonight I remember Cheryl, No. 13,906, but in my heart she was No. 2,078.”

In his email to me, Levi said that after he finally identified a British woman as his biological mother, she told him that he was conceived in a one-night stand with Chamberlain in San Francisco in 1964. She said she had kept his birth a secret from her own family and had struggled ever since with guilt over his birth and adoption. Levi added that in 2010 he reached out to two of Chamberlain’s sisters, by letter and by phone, but they spurned him.

Levi said he did not want a dime from the Chamberlain family and did not want to sully Wilt’s name. Rather, he wanted to meet members of the black side of his family and learn more about his biological father; to correct the “false history” that Chamberlain had no children; and to find out if Chamberlain had any other children, who would be his half-siblings. Levi said the search occupied nearly his every waking moment. He was ready to go public with his story.

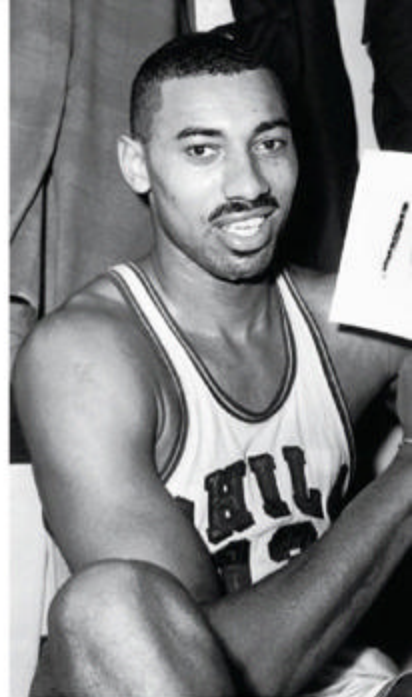
I talked with Levi by phone the day after receiving his email. Then we met for coffee. I’ve interviewed him 10 times, three of them at his two-bedroom apartment in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, where he lives alone. “I am simply an adopted person who has been on a long journey of self-discovery,” he wrote, “and [am] reaching out to people to learn more about where I came from.” His aunt Victoria (Vicki) Levi, a Boston-area

AARON LEVI



DOUBLE TAKE

Aaron at age 16 bore a striking resemblance to Chamberlain, here on the night of his mind-boggling single-triple against the Knicks in Hershey.



Meschery and others celebrated in clubs up and down Broadway in San Francisco. It was a time of social and political ferment. The Beatles had just come to the U.S.; long-held notions of race, sex, love, war and religion were being challenged.

Chamberlain was a commanding presence. “Wilt always wanted anonymity,” Meschery said, “but he never could get it because of his height and because of who he was and because he was [even] larger in his presentation of himself.” Meschery recalled Chamberlain’s showing up for a Warriors practice with his two dogs on leashes. He wore a flamboyant shirt open to the chest and “matching slacks, Egyptian gold chains, and sandals,” Meschery said. “I thought, Jeez, Wilt, if you want anonymity you better dress differently. You might want to wear an old brown suit and hunch over a little bit.”

On June 8, 2004, after nearly a year’s wait, Levi received the papers with background information about his birth parents from the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency. The details, obtained in 1965, were said to be entirely from his birth mother. She was described as a single, white, 26-year-old secretary of English-French descent who had been raised in England. Levi’s biological father was a single, 28-year-old black professional basketball player with black hair, brown eyes and bronze complexion, 6’ 10”, 240 pounds, born in Kansas, with a master’s degree.

Not all of the facts lined up. Chamberlain was a native of Philadelphia. He had attended the University of Kansas for three years without earning an undergraduate or master’s degree. The papers indicated that Levi’s biological parents had only a “casual relationship” and that the mother wouldn’t provide the father’s identity because she “wanted to protect his name.” The case files also indicated that Levi’s “birth mother felt that she could not raise a bi-racial child, especially because of . . . the values she was exposed to as a child who grew up in England.”

In 1964 the only San Francisco Warrior who was African-American, 28 years old and at least 6’ 10” and who had ties to Kansas was Chamberlain. Then there was the young Levi’s physical resemblance to Chamberlain. Levi’s older sister Naema Clark, living in Oregon and also searching for her biological parents at the time, commiserated with him. “Aaron is someone who takes everything literally and personally,” she said. “He’s guarded [and] overly thinks through a lot of things.” She told him about a website that deploys volunteer “search angels” with

database experience to help link adoptees with their biological parents.

In April 2009, after obtaining his birth certificate with his mother’s maiden name on it (his father’s name wasn’t noted), Levi went to the website recommended by his sister and posted that he was seeking help to find his birth mother. He included her name. He also wrote, “From the research that I have done, I think my father could have been Wilt Chamberlain.”

Launching a database pursuit in England using birth indexes, one search angel quickly located a likely candidate. (Out of respect for the privacy of the adoptive process, I have agreed to call Levi’s biological mother Elizabeth, not her real name. She told Levi she could never be interviewed about the circumstances of his birth or adoption.) Another search angel, without Levi’s permission, then made a deceptive post on the website of a newspaper published in the city where Elizabeth was born. On a “Lost Loved Ones” message board the search angel wrote, as if she were Levi, “I think enough time has passed that it’s ok for her family to know about me . . . I was adopted by a wonderful family and only wish to meet my biological mother.”

One of Elizabeth’s relatives still living in the area read the post and contacted Elizabeth’s brother. Days later Levi received an email from him. Elizabeth’s brother expressed shock over the post. He told Levi that he’d just phoned Elizabeth, and she was furious about the public nature of the Internet post and wanted it taken down immediately. Levi was angry with the search angel. “Her method was dangerously destructive,” Levi told me, “but it worked.”

His uncle’s email conveyed warmth, which gave Levi hope. He encouraged Levi to call him, so he did. The uncle told Levi that he’d phoned Elizabeth and asked, “Do you have a secret you’ve been keeping from me?” Her response: “How do you know about that?” The uncle said that Levi had many relatives who, no doubt, would like to meet him. Then he added, “By the way, you are right about who your father is.” He said Elizabeth was confused as to how Levi could’ve known about Chamberlain’s paternity because she had told hardly anyone.

Later that day Levi spoke by phone with Elizabeth. “My heart was pounding, racing, nervous, just a surreal moment,” he recalled, “talking for the first time to the woman who gave birth to me, hearing her voice, and then of course to hear that she sounded like an Englishwoman.”

Levi said she confirmed that she was his biological mother. They



When Elizabeth arrived at his aunt's apartment, Aaron hugged her at the doorway and said, "Oh, my God, this is the moment I've been waiting for my whole life."

spoke for more than an hour. Elizabeth had been married for more than 30 years, with no other children. She confirmed that Chamberlain was Levi's father and asked how he knew. Levi explained how the Santa Clara County records had all but identified Chamberlain.

Elizabeth told him the story of how she first met Chamberlain. She said that she and a girlfriend who knew Chamberlain went with a group to a jazz club in San Francisco, and she was introduced to him. He asked for her phone number. They went out a few nights later, she had too much to drink, and they ended up at Chamberlain's apartment. That night Aaron was conceived, she said. Elizabeth said she never saw Chamberlain again.

Through subsequent emails and conversations, Levi learned that when Elizabeth awoke the morning after her date with Chamberlain, she was no longer in his bed but back in her own bed at home. She said she called him about five months later to tell him that she was pregnant, that only he could be the father and that she planned to put up their child for adoption; then she called him after their son was born to reconfirm her intentions. The Santa Clara County documents indicated that biracial children were "considered to be hard to place" in 1965—Aaron spent his first six months in foster care—and that his biological father had made financial arrangements to help his mother "get on her feet." (He did not, Elizabeth told Levi.)

Several years later, Elizabeth learned from a phone call to Santa Clara County that her son had been adopted by a fine family in Oregon. That eased her mind, she told Levi, and she went on with her life, still keeping his birth a secret from her family.

Aaron and Elizabeth met for the first time in the autumn of 2010, in Boston, at the apartment of his aunt Vicki Levi. He said he paced nervously before Elizabeth's arrival, wondering what to say and how to put her (and himself) at ease. When she arrived, he hugged her at the doorway and said, "Oh, my God, this is the moment I've been waiting for my whole life."

She became emotional, turned away and said, "Don't say that. You'll get me going and I won't be able to stop."

Outside, rain fell as they sipped tea in the living room. They spent the afternoon in upbeat conversation, never mentioning Chamberlain. But when they met a couple of days later he felt the mood was right.

"Were you friends with him?" Levi asked.

"No, we were not. It was really just two days."

"What was he like?" he said.

"He seemed very charming, but I really can't remember."

She was hardly a groupie, Levi told me. She knew nothing about basketball or U.S. sports. She knew little about Chamberlain's history. "He's dead, isn't he?" she asked Levi at one point.

"It's hard to accept that you are a product of a one-night stand," Levi told me. "I wanted her to tell me something good about him, but that wasn't going to happen. I realized that we had different feelings about him. She sees him as a womanizer. . . . To me, he's my father."

Vicki Levi returned to her apartment late that afternoon and met Elizabeth. "They were still sitting on that couch six hours later, still talking," she said. "She is a very, very lovely, gracious woman, charming, soft-spoken, not loud like we tend to be. She is the kind of woman you would like to meet again. I see her as a victim of so many things—her own attractions, her naiveté, her time."

Aaron Levi shared with me emails Elizabeth sent him, each one signed *Bisous* (French for *Kisses*). He showed me a photo of Elizabeth in the 1960s that his uncle had sent, and Levi said she looked like a young Joanne Woodward. He showed me more recent photos of her as a 76-year-old woman. He let me hear messages she had left on his phone answering machine in her small British voice; he has saved every message she left him, no matter how brief. In one email she said that if he felt the need to go public, he should go ahead.

Aaron and Elizabeth met again last fall, in London. They went to art galleries together and shared long conversations in which they found common interests. (Both watch *Downton Abbey*.) They rode the London Eye, a huge Ferris wheel beside the Thames. She didn't want Levi to meet her nieces and nephews—his cousins—and that bothered him. He told me it made their relationship feel conditional.

He had thought a lot about Wilt and Elizabeth and their brief interaction, and he desperately wanted to know how Chamberlain responded when he learned he had fathered a child. Was he helpful? Sympathetic? Compassionate? Levi said he finally asked Elizabeth about it over breakfast one morning in London.

"Well, he kind of chuckled," she said, "and said, 'Oh, so I'm gonna have a kid out there, huh?' "

"Did he offer you help?" Levi asked.

"No. I was very clear about what I was planning to do."

"I think," Levi told me later, "[Chamberlain] probably realized that he had lucked out, that she was not the type to seek something out of it. My mother took the burden completely on herself to take care of this problem of an unwanted child.

"[Elizabeth] is, at least to me, a delicate little woman who I am asking to dredge up something that is to me super important, the genesis of my life. For her, it's related to the biggest mistake of her life. I just have to see the difference in where we are coming from.

GENTLE GIANT

Chamberlain posed on his Goliath-sized bed in 1986, five years before bragging that he had slept with 20,000 women.



"I've got something between perfection—which would be total acceptance—and total rejection. . . . Although I don't like the idea of secrets, I suppose I am having a secret relationship with [Elizabeth]. I guess I am taking what I can get. Am I super happy about it? No. But that is where we are, and I don't know if that will change. She is in her late seventies, and this has been a secret for 50 years. I think she likes me enough, and if I were a different type of person, she might not accept me. To be ignored is devastating."

The Chamberlains have ignored Levi, he said. But last summer I persuaded Seymour (Sy) Goldberg, Wilt's longtime attorney, to see us at his Marina Del Rey law office. Levi showed Goldberg a photo on his phone of Elizabeth from the 1960s and said, "She is kind of the type that [Chamberlain] liked, I think."

Goldberg said, "He liked all kinds. Don't limit it. They had to be young and cute, O.K.? That was the criteria." The octogenarian lawyer sat back in his chair, his right index finger laid against his temple, and listened to Levi's narrative. Goldberg was friendly, playful, a good schmoozer, the ultimate Chamberlain loyalist. He wore a gold bracelet and a loose-fitting Tommy Bahama shirt that revealed gray chest hair. On the wall beside his desk was an old photo of himself sitting between Chamberlain and Muhammad Ali.

Over four hours, Goldberg fondly shared many stories about Chamberlain and their friendship of more than 30 years. "People don't stay married that long," he said. Until now, he said, no one had come forward to say he or she was Chamberlain's child. "From time to time," he added, "it would occur to me that [Chamberlain] was pretty damn lucky. Maybe he took extra precautions."

Chamberlain "liked all kinds" of women, Goldberg said. "Don't limit it. They had to be young and cute, O.K.? That was the criteria."

Levi offered to sign an agreement that he would never make a financial claim. Chamberlain bequeathed more than \$6 million, much of it to children's causes, and \$650,000 to his alma mater, Kansas. "I don't think that's the issue," said Goldberg, who was the executor of the will. Besides, he added, "everything is gone."

Levi said that when he called Wilt's sister Selina Gross, she told him not to call again, and that Wilt's other surviving sister, Barbara Lewis, did not respond to his letter. "I have no reason to disbelieve your story," Goldberg said of Levi's claim to being Chamberlain's son, "but how do I know?"

Levi said the Chamberlains could confirm his blood connection "by doing the [DNA] test."

"Why should they?" Goldberg said.

Two hours later, sitting in her office at an aquatic therapy center in West L.A., Lynda Huey turned her chair to face Aaron Levi. "Give me a moment," she said as she put on her glasses to read the Santa Clara County non-identifying information. It didn't surprise her to see the mention of a master's degree. "Wilt lied a lot when he was meeting women," she said.

Huey, blonde, trim and fit at 67, met Chamberlain in 1971 and became a part of his world. They were lovers for years, though near the end of his life they were only friends. She worked with him as an aquatic therapist, helping him recover from elbow, hip and knee surgeries. She was with him on the last Saturday night of his life, watching *Shakespeare in Love* with him in his bedroom in Bel-Air.

Levi told Huey how Elizabeth woke up in her own apartment, not remembering how she'd left Chamberlain's place. "She didn't even remember the sex?" Huey asked.

"It's a blur," Levi replied. He suggested that Chamberlain had taken Elizabeth home and tucked her in out of kindness. "Well, two things," Huey

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH. ARE YOU?



BRANDON
MARSHALL

MICHAEL
ANGELAKOS

WAYNE
BRADY

BEN
SCRIVENS



To join the conversation,
visit BringChange2Mind.org.
We Are **#StrongerThanStigma**



Start the conversation.
End the stigma.



replied. "It's kindness, but he was also making sure that she didn't wake up in his place and he would have to deal with it. Wilt was the getaway king."

As for Levi's belief that he is Chamberlain's son, Huey said, "I'll give you the reasoning why someone might not believe you. [A white woman] knows that she is pregnant with a black kid, and she knows the kid is going to be tall. It could be any tall black man anywhere. What's the best thing that she can say? 'It's Wilt Chamberlain's.' That's the get-out-of-jail-free card."

But Levi noted that Elizabeth was from a different country and didn't even know who Chamberlain was. She mentioned his name only when Levi found her nearly a half-century later.

"I think he wanted to be a father," Huey said of Chamberlain. "Several times he and I went out to look at properties together. He wanted to set up a place where he could raise a bunch of kids." She said he wanted to adopt either black or mixed-race kids.

I asked Huey if she believed that Levi is Chamberlain's son. "I want to believe it, but I'm not sure," she said.

"Do you think I look like him?" Levi asked.

"I think you looked tremendously like him when you were 16," she said.

"I want to look at your hands," Huey said. Levi placed his right hand in her palm. She examined it closely, lovingly. "You have thumbs like his," she said. "I loved Wilt's hands."

Months later I reached Barbara Lewis, Wilt's sister, by phone at her home in Las Vegas. Among family members she serves as lead custodian of her brother's legacy. "He and I were very close," she said. "Extremely close." When Goldberg first told her about Levi and his desire to meet her, she said she told him, "Sy, I'm not interested. Wilt's dead."

She hasn't changed her mind. "I'm not interested in meeting him because I just don't believe it," she said. Nor is she interested in seeing photos of Levi. "He'd have to look very much like Wilt," she said. "That is a distinct look. I can't even imagine that."

I explained that Levi has been on a long journey of self-discovery. "Which I can understand," Lewis said. "Everybody wants to try to figure out who they are." If Wilt were still alive, she said, things would be entirely different: "Probably this young man would have written to him. It wouldn't be for us to get involved, especially since we are the last two [siblings] in a family of 11."

Her voice rose in defense of Wilt: "I don't un-



SI.COM/VIDEO



To watch a video feature on Aaron Levi and his search to connect with the Chamberlain family, go to si.com

Gary M. Pomerantz is the author of *WILT, 1962: The Night of 100 Points* and *the Dawn of a New Era*.

derstand why this is important when he is gone. What difference does it make now?"

I described Elizabeth, how she met Wilt at a club in 1964 and how she knew nothing about basketball. "For her to say it was Wilt, it could've been anybody," Lewis said. "She didn't know him."

I asked if anyone else had ever claimed to be Wilt's offspring. "Not to me," Lewis said. "Never."

I said, "The only scientific proof. . ."

She finished my sentence: ". . . is DNA. I'm certainly not giving up DNA."

If she were to do so, she explained, it would be "without [Wilt's] O.K., and I wouldn't do that. I don't want to be involved in it."

Wilt's other surviving sister, Selina Gross, did not return phone messages.

In *A View from Above*, Chamberlain left these thoughts for Aaron Levi to ponder:

Any idiot can father a child, and too many of them do.

I believe in adoption and doing as much as we can for the kids who are already here.

"Painful," Levi said. "He knew that I was put up for adoption. That hurt."

Harriet Levi, his adoptive mother, said, "Aaron has a right to say, 'Here I am, don't hang up the phone on me, world, because I exist.'"

Meschery said, "It seems highly possible that Wilt fathered a child. I'm surprised there aren't more. But I can understand the Chamberlain sisters' not wanting any part of it. They are very protective of their brother. My experience with Barbara is that she is a very kind and loving woman and very much attached to her brother. I think Aaron has gone as far as he can go. He knows who his father is and who his mother is. If he can get a relationship from his mother's side of the family, that's 50% of the battle. . . Trying to get Wilt's family on board, in my opinion, it's not going to happen."

Levi's 50th birthday has passed. He doesn't want to wait another decade to complete his odyssey. "I've been burning with this for 10 years now, so I feel like I've got to try now," he said.

In his research Levi found several of Chamberlain's nephews on Facebook. Maybe one would understand his quest and share DNA. So far, though, fearing more rejection, he hasn't tried to contact them.

By going public with his story, he said, he's reaching out not only to those he believes are his blood relatives but also to all adoptees. He hopes his story moves adoptees to begin their own searches earlier. "My life would be completely different," he said, "if I had done this 20 years ago, when Wilt was still alive." He has imagined a conversation he would have had with Chamberlain: "Do you remember my mother? Do you remember her telling you that she was pregnant?" Depending on his answer to that, I would go further." He paused. Softly, he said, "I would ask, 'Have you thought about me over the years?'" □

SI.COM/SWIMSUIT



NOW
AVAILABLE



PRINT



WEB



TABLET



MOBILE

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED
SWIMSUIT
2015

CELEBRATING BEAUTY WITH



OFFICIAL MARKETING PARTNERS OF SI SWIMSUIT LAUNCH WEEK



Recreation Director

→ BY STEVE RUSHIN



WILL SHORTZ IS the crossword editor of *The New York Times* and America's wordplay laureate, a man who sees the phrase *Spot remover* and thinks *dogcatcher*. Of all the crossword clues Shortz has written in four decades of professional puzzling, his favorite is IT TURNS INTO A DIFFERENT STORY. The answer: SPIRAL STAIRCASE.

And though he's the in-house puzzle master at National Public Radio and remains "the Errol Flynn of crosswording"—as Jon Stewart once called him, in a nod to sword-crossing—Shortz is also our nation's foremost ambassador for another kind of play. The clue: IT MAKES WILL SHORTZ CHANGE INTO GYM SHORTS. The answer: PING-PONG.

Shortz, 62, has played table tennis every day since Oct. 3, 2012, when he was forced to skip after arriving at a table tennis club in Croatia only to find that it had closed early. Previously, he hadn't missed a day since Christmas of 2011. "Crosswords are my profession," he says. "I don't want to do them when I'm not working—well, sometimes I do—but table tennis is something else that's a little obsessive."

A little? Shortz has played table tennis in all but two of the United States—that's 48 Down, in crossword parlance—and needs only Hawaii and Mississippi to complete the grid. In January, after a speaking engagement in Sun Valley, Idaho, Shortz drove 10½ hours to play in Casper, Wyo. Last October, when he accepted an award at Indiana University—where he had majored in Enigmatology—his alma mater set up a Ping-Pong table in the library to preserve his streak.

On this winter Wednesday night Shortz is in the magnificent club he owns, the 14,000-square-foot Westchester Table Tennis Center in Pleasantville, N.Y., presiding over its 19 tables like a table tennis Toots Shor. "Except some restaurants make money," Shortz says. "Our club doesn't."

Rather, the club gives him a steady supply of opponents every night until 11, after which he returns home to dream up puzzles. The other night, as he lay in bed, he thought of "a two-syllable word that's a U.S. city, but reverse the syllables phonetically and it's an NBA charge." After an agonizing silence, Shortz says, "Phoenix and Knicks fee."

His club's 170 members come from 25 nations and are

The clue:
It makes
Will Shortz
change
into gym
shorts.

The answer:
table tennis,
another
pastime
for which
America's
crossword
laureate is
our foremost
ambassador.



Ping-Pong or
crosswords—
what's your
preferred
pastime?

Join the
discussion on
Twitter by
using
#SIPointAfter
and following
@SteveRushin

nearly all ages. At its highest level tournament table tennis is contested by an astonishing variety of humankind. In the final of the U.S. Open last July, a 44-year-old man defeated a 15-year-old boy. "I have consistently lost to nine-year-olds," says Gordon Kaye, 46, the new CEO of USA Table Tennis. "It's really infuriating but also really cool."

This is not how they develop players in China, winner of 24 of the 28 Olympic table tennis gold medals. Shortz tells the story of Kai Zhang. One day a man walked into a kindergarten in Beijing, selected Kai from his desk and sent him to a special school to play table tennis. Advancing to another school, Kai played table tennis exclusively for five years, without academic studies, in the slim hope of making the national team or—more likely—becoming a trainer. "Which is not much of a life," Shortz says.

But wait: It turns into a different story. Zhang's parents, through a friend in the U.S., sent their son to live in New York City. Shortz became his legal guardian. The 17-year-old now gets straight A's in math at Pleasantville High. He plays table tennis at his leisure at the Westchester Table Tennis Center and is the No. 7-ranked player in America under 18. "You lose the love if you are working at it every day, 10 hours, eating and sleeping table tennis," says Kai, his smile revealing his braces. "This feels like my dream."

All around him, Ping-Pong balls are bouncing with a champagne-bubble happiness. The club seems carbonated, and so does Shortz, who this month will host the 38th-annual American Crossword Puzzle Tournament in Stamford, Conn. "Some know me only for crosswords, and some know me only for table tennis," he says, rallying with the club's Barbadian teaching pro, Robert Roberts. "And then there's a small group who know me only for Sudoku." But that's another spiral staircase. □



SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (ISSN 0038-822X) is published weekly, with extra issues in February and August and skipped issues in January, February, April and July, by Time Inc. Principal Office: Time & Life Building, Rockefeller Center, New York, NY 10020-1393. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40110178. Return undeliverable Canada addresses through the UPM process: GST #R69381521R001. U.S. Subscriptions: \$65 for one year. SUBSCRIBERS: If the postal service alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within two years. POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to P.O. See DMV 707.4.12.5. NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: send address corrections to Post Office Box 62121, Tampa, FL 33662-2121. MAILING LIST: We make a portion of our mailing list available to reputable firms. If you would prefer that we not include your name, please call or write us. ©2015 TIME INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED. SPORTS ILLUSTRATED IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF TIME INC. CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SUBSCRIPTIONS: For 24/7 service, please use our website: www.SI.com/customerservice. You can also call 1-800-528-5000 or write to SI at P.O. Box 62120, Tampa, FL 33662-2120.

GRANDE
PIKE PLACE® ROAST
WITH ROOM
~
10-HOUR SMOKED BACON
AGED CHEDDAR
FLUFFY EGG
LA BOULANGE™ CROISSANT

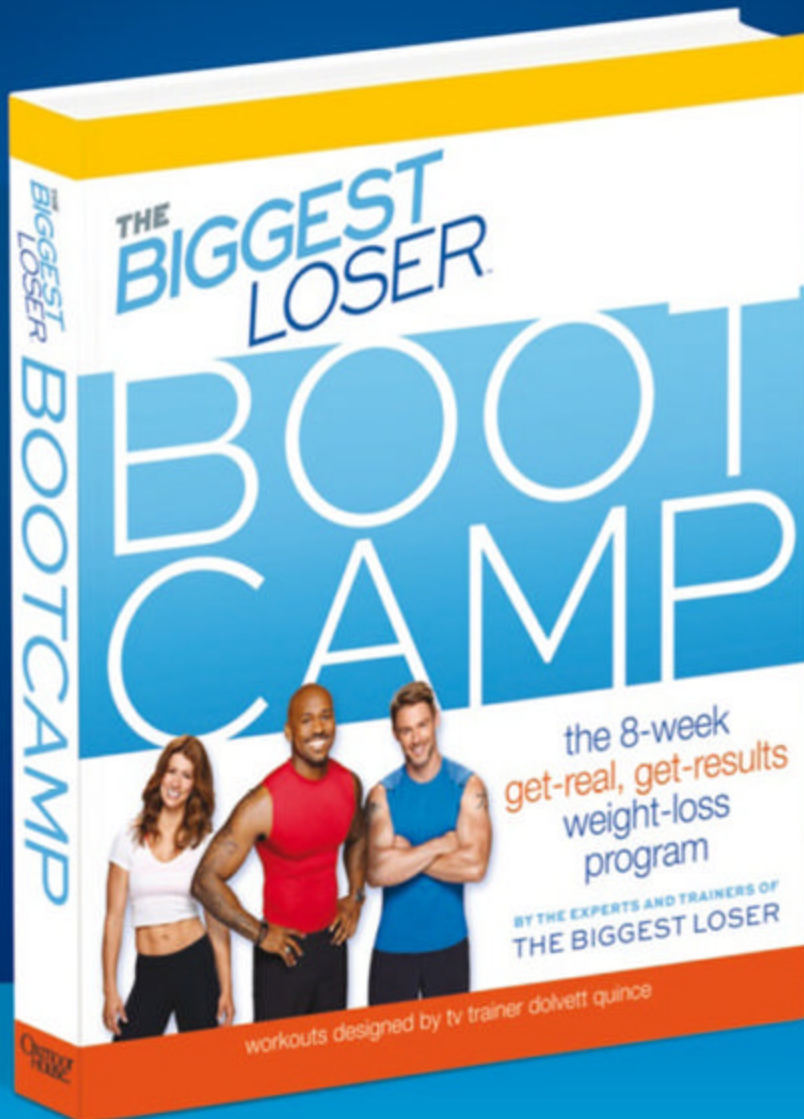


**Introducing the Double-Smoked Bacon, Cheddar & Egg.
The newest member of our breakfast sandwich family.**

THE PERFECT MATCH FOR YOUR MORNING CUP



YOUR TRANSFORMATION BEGINS NOW



**DAILY
WORKOUTS**

**RECIPES,
QUICK MEAL &
SNACK IDEAS**

**NO
GUESSWORK**

**Boost your confidence with this new,
easy-to-follow 8-week program.**

NOW AVAILABLE WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD

Enhance your experience online at BLBootcamp.com



Consult your doctor before beginning any weight loss program. © 2015 Universal Television LLC & Reveille LLC; The Biggest Loser is a trademark of Reveille LLC and its related entities, and is used under license. All rights reserved.